



Pittsfield (MA) Parks Department Scrapbooks

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Pittsfield Parks
Department
Scrapbook
2003

Winter Carnival ski races scheduled for Saturday

PITTSFIELD — Pittsfield's 58th annual Winter Carnival Downhill Ski Races are scheduled to be held Saturday at Bousquet Ski Area.

The race is open to area children ages 5 through 13 with separate girls and boys classes in four age categories: age 6 and under; ages 7, 8, 9; ages 10, 11, 12, and ages 13, 14, 15.

These categories are for non-trained racers only. Trophies will be awarded for first through fifth place in each division.

Classes and awards will be duplicated for entrants on snowboards. This is new for this event.

The course will be an easy open slalom and racers will be allowed two timed runs; the best time will be used for trophy position.

Pre-registration forms will be available at the Springside House, 874 North St., until Friday. Registration at Bousquet Ski Area

will begin at 9 in the lower lobby and continue until the races begin at 10.

There is no entry fee. Racers will need to have a parent or guardian available for a consent signature. There will be free hot chocolate for each registrant.

The chairman of the city ski meet is Dave Melle at 684-3050, or for more information, one may call the Pittsfield Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation at 499-9343. 1/29/03

Carnival queen contest kicks off; 17 vie for crown

PITTSFIELD — The 58th Pittsfield Winter Carnival Queen Contest kicked off Jan. 12 with a luncheon at Itam Lodge. The contestants, listed below, have been selling buttons since then.

The money raised by the sale of the buttons pays for all carnival events, including Family Day, toboggan and ski races, the speed skating competition, scholarships and the Winter Carnival Ball.

The ball will be held Saturday, Feb. 15, at 8 at Itam Lodge, where the 2003 Winter Carnival queen will be chosen and crowned. The photographer for the carnival is James Marby of Picture Perfect Studios.

The contestants are as follows:

• **Kelly MacDonald**, 18, daughter of Michael and Pamela MacDonald, is a senior at Taconic High School. She is a member of the varsity volleyball team, has participated in spring musicals, and is a member of the National Honor Society, French National Honor Society, Student Council and Berkshire Youth United.

She is a 10-year member of the Pittsfield Figure Skating Club. MacDonald volunteers at the Special Olympics and as an after-school tutor, and participated in Girls State. She has received the Daughters of the American Revolution, Wellesley College Book and Outstanding English Student awards.

• **Casey DiCicco**, 17, daughter of Joseph A. DiCicco of Pittsfield, is a senior at Taconic. She has been an active dancer with Cantarella School of Dance for 12 years and has been a member of the Albany Berkshire Ballet's junior company for four years, during which time she has danced at local nursing homes and in the United Cerebral Palsy telethons.

Her school activities include the yearbook committee, class council, peer resource team, National Honor Society and the Business Professionals of America. She plans on studying fashion design in college.

• **Shannon Wasnewskey**, 17, daughter of Mark and Joyce Wasnewskey of Pittsfield, is a senior at Taconic. Her school activities include National Honor So-

ciety, Student Council and Berkshire Youth United. She played volleyball for two years and works at Stop & Shop. She volunteered as a teacher for a first Communion class and also volunteers for the Special Olympics.

• **Meggi Connor**, 17, daughter of Michael and Mariellen Connor, is a senior at Taconic. She is a varsity swimmer and cross country runner, and has been on Western Massachusetts teams for both sports. She is active in Berkshire Youth United, Student Council and the prom committee. An honor roll student, she volunteers at the Special Olympics.

• **Shawna Lahey**, 17, daughter of Sheryl Maihle and Mark Lahey of Pittsfield, is a senior at Taconic. Lahey has worked in several jobs and has participated in the cheerleading program both at the Catholic Youth Center and Taconic for almost 10 years.

She is certified in lifeguard training, cardiopulmonary resuscitation and first aid for the professional rescuer, waterfront life-guarding, automated external defibrillator essentials and preventing disease transmission. She is utilizing these certifications as a lifeguard and teacher's aid.

• **Jennifer Nailos**, 17, daughter of David and Jeanne Nailos of Pittsfield, is a senior at Taconic. Nailos is a member and section leader of the school band, marching band, jazz ensemble and chorus. She has also been a member of the Eagle concert and jazz bands for several years. She has participated in the Western District Music Festival as a member of the chorus and the jazz ensemble.

Her school activities include spring musicals, the Fall Festival of Shakespeare, soccer, varsity cheerleading, on-air personality and program director at radio station WTBR-FM 89.7, National Honor and French National Honor societies. She coaches St. Francis' bantam cheerleading at the CYC.

• **Seanna Sykes**, 19, daughter of Winslow and Kathleen Avery of Pittsfield, is a senior at Taconic. Sykes works in school's student personnel office and is a member



The 2003 Pittsfield Winter Carnival Queen contestants from left to right, front row, are Erin Starsja, Amanda Plaine, Nicole L. DiSimoni, Meggi Connor and Mandy St. Pierre. Middle row: Allison Chou, who has since withdrawn from the contest, Kristen St. John, Jennifer Nailos, 2002 Queen Nicki May, 2002 Lady in Waiting Lyndsay Paris, Brittany Breault, Tamara Morgan and Nicole Yon. Back row: Kelly McDonald, Amber Martin, Shawna Lahey, Casey DiCicco, Shannon Wasnewskey and Seanna Sykes. Missing from photo: Brittney Lynn Wright.

of the Student Council. She also has been on Taconic's wrestling team and prom committee, and was a member of Shakespeare & Company.

A former Girl Scout, she played soccer for the Pittsfield Parks Department summer league and has taken karate.

• **Nicole Yon**, 18, daughter of Greg and Christine Yon of Pittsfield, is a senior at Taconic. She is the starting varsity pitcher of the softball team and has recently been named an NACA All-American Scholar Athlete. She is active in the Student Council, prom committee and the peer resource team. She has volunteered with the South Congregational Church soup kitchen, Relay for Life, Special Olympics and as a CYC cheerleading coach.

Yon is employed at Kneebone's Steakhouse. Her academic honors include being named in Who's Who Among High School Students and on the National Honor Roll.

• **Nicole Lynn DiSimoni**, 17, daughter of James and Lynn DiSimoni, is a senior at Taconic. DiSimoni is the secretary/treasurer for Berkshire Youth United and a member of Business Professionals of America, Student Council and yearbook committee. She is an actress in Taconic's spring musicals and is employed by Purple Plume in Lenox.

• **Erin Starsja**, 17, resides with her mother and stepfather, Lily and Art Pandell, in Pittsfield. She is a senior at Pittsfield High

School, where she is a peer mediator. She has participated in the Future Educators of America, the Robotic Competition and Massachusetts College of Liberal Art's Computer Programming Competition and is a member of the Young Adult Council at the Berkshire Athenaeum.

Her activities at St. Mary's Church include altar server, eucharistic minister, religious education teacher and Family Festival volunteer. Starsja is employed by attorney Thomas J. Hamel.

• **Amber Martin**, 17, daughter of Michael Martin and Susan and David Maloy of Pittsfield, is a senior at Taconic. She performs in the Fall Festival of Shakespeare, Taconic's spring musicals and honors chorus, the South Mountain Festival, Western District Chorus and Jimmy Fund Concert Series. She was a member of the varsity wrestling team for one year.

She was a counselor for the Berkshire Community College Children's Circus Camp and a teacher and music coordinator for the Sheffield Chapel vacation Bible school. Martin plans to attend MCLA and major in music education.

• **Tamara Morgan**, 17, daughter of James Morgan and Teresa and Joseph Palmieri, all of Pittsfield, is a senior at St. Joseph's High School. She is a member of the Ambassadors Club, Student Council and peer education. She is co-director of community service at St. Joseph's, and has participated

in the Walk for Life, Pittsfield Youth City Council, Berkshire Teen Network and the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life.

She is an altar server and lector at St. Mark's Church and has volunteered as a Bible camp counselor.

• **Brittney Lynn Wright**, 17, daughter of Rob and Kay Wright of Pittsfield, is a senior at Pittsfield High. She is a member of the Student Council, Spanish Club, yearbook committee and swim and softball teams, and is captain of the volleyball team.

• **Kristen St. John**, 17, daughter of Cheryl St. John of Pittsfield, is a senior at Pittsfield High. She is a member of the class council, Spanish and French clubs, Youth Group, varsity swim team, softball and track teams, and prom committee. She was junior class treasurer, Create-a-Dream activity coordinator, and basketball manager for the girls' varsity team.

• **Mandy St. Pierre**, 17, daughter of Michael and Cheryl St. Pierre of Pittsfield, is a senior at Taconic. Her school activities include spring musicals, the Fall Festival of Shakespeare, chorus, marching band and Western District Music Festival. She also is on the cross country and track and field teams,

and in the Youth Group.

She is a religious dance teacher at her church and has participated in the Relay for Life. Her interests include singing and playing instruments, including the clarinet, flute, recorder, piano, violin and saxophone.

• **Brittany Raé Breault**, 17, daughter of Brian M. Breault of East Greenbush, N.Y., and Victoria M. Spencer of Pittsfield, is a senior and honors student at Taconic. Her activities include varsity cross country, and cross-country skiing and track and field teams.

Her volunteer activities include being a senior mentor at the Pittsfield DARE summer camp, Special Olympics and chairman of the youth committee of the American Cancer Society.

• **Amanda Plaine**, 17, daughter of Mitchell and Barbara Plaine of Pittsfield, is a senior and honor student at St. Joseph's. She is involved in Student Council, prom committee and Special Olympics. She volunteers at the Boys' and Girls' Club preschool, has been a tutor at Morningside Elementary and is involved with the after-school program at the CYC. She also has participated in the annual spring musical and has played the piano since age 5.

Toboggan races planned Sunday at Osceola Park

PITTSFIELD — Pittsfield's 58th annual Winter Carnival Toboggan Races will be held Sunday at Osceola Park on Gale Avenue.

Automobile parking will be available on Oswald Avenue at the bottom of the hill.

Registration will be from 11 to 12:30, with timed runs starting at noon. Participants can arrive

early for practice runs. There is no entry fee. Young racers will need to have a parent or guardian available for a consent signature.

There are categories for two-, three- and four-person toboggan teams in all ages. Entrants may participate in more than one team. Toboggans will be available for loan, but participants may bring their own. Only wooden U-shaped toboggans will be allowed. Trophies will be awarded after the timed runs.

Contestants for carnival queen are expected to attend to provide opportunities to purchase Winter Carnival buttons, the proceeds of which support all the carnival events.

The chairman of the toboggan races is Ron Przedpelski at 443-1617 or for information call the Pittsfield Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation at 499-9343. 1/29/03

Learn to Skate program set for Club

The Pittsfield Parks speed skating club, in conjunction with the Community Services and Parks and Recreation departments, will conduct a Learn to Skate program at the Pittsfield Boys' and Girls' Club on Dec. 26-27 and again on Dec. 30-31, daily from 11:45 to 12:45 p.m.

The fee is \$18 for the four-day clinics and children must be at least 5 years old. Registration will take place at the rink on Sunday from 7-8 p.m. Also, registration will be held at the Parks' Commission office on 874 North St., today, Friday and Monday between 8:30 and 4.

All skaters are required to have helmets and gloves. Elbow and knee pads are optional. The Boys' and Girls' Club will issue skates to those who need them for no charge. Also, no baggy pants or long scarves should be worn. 1/29/03

Cross-country ski races slated

PITTSFIELD — The Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee has scheduled its annual cross-country ski races on Sunday as part of the 58th annual Pittsfield Winter Carnival.

The event is held at the Canterbury Farm Ski Touring Center on Fred Snow Road, Becket (623-0100). Registration starts at 9. Races begin at 10.

There is no entry fee. Younger

racers will need to have a parent or guardian available for a consent signature.

Trophy prizes will be awarded with special prizes for overall men's and women's class winners.

For more information, call Ed Bond at 623-5782 or the Pittsfield Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation, 499-9343. 1/29/03

• **PITTSFIELD:** The Hebert Arboretum at Springside Park will hold its annual Winterfest tomorrow from 11 to 3 at Springside House, 874 North St. There will be activities for people of all ages, including cross-country skiing, cookie decorating, snow sculptures, a snowball contest, face-painting, pony rides, a scavenger hunt, tree and animal track identification, and a cardboard sled contest. Refreshments will be served. The event is free. 1/29/03

Winter Carnival scheduled to get under way

By Jackie Connolly
Eagle Correspondent

PITTSFIELD — The 58th annual Pittsfield Winter Carnival kicks off this Sunday with the sale of buttons for the Carnival Queen Contest and without the worries about a snow drought that canceled most of last year's events.

The annual event provides winter activities, mostly outdoors and mostly free of charge, for all ages. It is organized by the Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee, a volunteer nonprofit organization under the auspices of the Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation.

The first public event will be Family Day on Saturday at 10 a.m. at the Controy Pavilion on Onota Lake. The entrance is located on Lakeway Drive via Valentine Road.

"We are beginning Family Day earlier this year so the kids get to do everything," said carnival coordinator Dave Melle. In the past, the event has been held on Sundays.

The Carnival Queen hopefuls have four weeks, through Feb. 9,

to sell at least 1,500 buttons, which fund the carnival events. This year's button was designed by St. Mark's Middle School eighth-grader Laura Clark.

Winter Carnival Queen contestants must be between the ages of 17-21, and attend school or work in Pittsfield or adjoining towns.

The contestants will sell buttons, two for \$1, and will be doing face painting for children at Family Day. Family Day activities include sled, ice skating, and snowshoeing races, along with snow sculpture contests, horseshoes on ice golf, kite flying and hayrides.

At the coronation, contestants will be judged on their performances in the areas of poise, personality, speech, appearance and Winter Carnival knowledge. The newly crowned queen will receive \$500 and the lady in waiting will receive \$250 college scholarships.

In addition, the Carnival Queen hopefuls choose one of their own as Miss Congeniality. A scholarship will be given to the contestant who sells the most buttons. The amount of the scholarship

varies on the amount of buttons she sells.

This year, there are 18 contestants: Brittany Breault, Allison Chou, Meggi Connor, Casey DiCicco, Nicole DiSimoni, Shawna Lahey, Kelly MacDonald, Amber Martin, Tamara Morgan, Jennifer Nailos, Amanda Plaine, Kristen St. John, Mandy St. Pierre, Erin Starsja, Seanna Sykes, Shannon Wasnwesky, Brittney Wright, and Nicole Yon.

The cross-country ski race will take place on Sunday, Jan. 26, at Canterbury Farm Ski Touring area on Fred Snow Road in Becket. Registration is at 9 for the race at 10.

The City Ski Meet will once again be held at Bousquet Ski Area on Dan Fox Drive for children 13 and under on Saturday, Feb. 1. Registration is at 9. Skiers will get two runs down the hill and will be judged on best time.

The Toboggan Race is on Sunday, Feb. 2, at Oseola Park on Gale Ave. There are two-, three- and four-person race categories; all ages can participate. Toboggans are supplied but partici-

pants can bring their own. Registration is at 11. Timed runs start at noon.

The final Winter Carnival event is the speed skating race on Saturday, March 1, at 1 p.m. at the Vietnam Veterans Skating Rink in North Adams. The Pittsfield Speed Skating Club is the host team, in conjunction with the Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee. One must be a registered member of the United States Speed Skating association and pay a \$25 entrance fee.

There will also be novice classes offered between the races. All ages can participate. There is a \$10 entry fee. For additional information, contact Ed Basinski, president of the Pittsfield Parks Speed Skating Club, at 442-7541.

The carnival committee is still looking for volunteers. Meetings are at 7 p.m. most Wednesday evenings during January and February at the Springside House on Upper North Street. More information is available by calling 499-9343 or at the Web site www.cwnicholls.com/Carnival.

Ski tow to open at Osceola Park

PITTSFIELD — The Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation Department has announced that the Osceola Park ski tow will open Thursday and will operate through Tuesday, Dec. 31. In addition, the ski tow will operate every Saturday and Sunday during the months of January and February, and each day during the February school vacation.

Hours of operation are noon to 4, and are weather dependent. Osceola Park is on Osceola Street, and the ski tow can be accessed from Gala Avenue.

For more information: Parks Department at 499-9343. 1/2/03

1/2/03
PITTSFIELD: The Osceola Park Ski Tow will not operate Saturday. The Pittsfield Parks and Recreation Department is encouraging the community to attend the Winter Carnival Family Day at Controy Pavilion at Burbank Park instead. The ski tow will reopen on Sunday and will be open every weekend from noon to 4 through the end of Feb. 1/14/03

Then & Now



The snowsuits may look different, but the delight kids take in sledding and sliding was the same years ago, above, as it is today, below. Unidentified youngsters above, were photographed in Pittsfield's Clapp Park, probably in the early 1960s. Those below were taking part in Pittsfield's Winterfest last weekend at Springside Park. Matthew Moreau, 3, center, sits on his handmade cardboard sled. At left are Jessica Moon, 10; Lauryn Garner, 9; and Andrea Moreau, 9. On right is 5-year-old Dominique Skinkle. All are from Pittsfield.



Julie A. Brown / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Family Day scheduled for Winter Carnival

PITTSFIELD — The 58th annual Winter Carnival Family Day will be held Saturday, Jan. 18, from 10 to 3 at the Controy Pavilion at Burbank Park on Onota Lake.

Attendees are asked to enter the Burbank Park parking area by way of Lakeway Drive from Valentine Road.

The public should note that the event is being held on a new day and time this year.

All 18 queen contestants will be

selling Winter Carnival buttons, two for \$1. Money raised from the sales fund the Winter Carnival events.

Activities will include sled, skating and snowshoe races, horseshoes on ice, kite flying, snow sculpturing and golf-on-ice competitions. Clubs and balls are supplied or participants can bring their own.

Annual favorite Richie Powers will transform large blocks of ice into ice sculptures.

Horse-drawn hay wagon rides will be provided throughout the day to shuttle participants to and from the parking area and the activities.

Free helium balloons and refreshments will be available and the queen contestants will provide face painting.

Registration for individual events will be held from 10 to 12:30.

Competitions will be from 10 to 1:30 with awards at 2. Entry is free of charge. 1/1/03

An ice fishing derby is also part of the celebration. Registration begins at 7 a.m. at the Controy Pavilion. There is a modest charge for adults. Prizes will be awarded in many age categories. The derby ends at 2.

Family Day is organized by the Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee, an all-volunteer group, under the auspices of the Pittsfield Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation.



All aboard

Heading out for a ride on their homemade sled during the Winterfest at Springside Park in Pittsfield are, from front, 8-year-old Derrick Skinkle of Pittsfield, and brothers Elliot, 4, and Benjamin Richardson, 7, of Cheshire. Giving them a push to get started is Rob Wolff.

Julie A. Brown / Berkshire Eagle Staff

1/3/03

Annual learn-to-skate program scheduled

The Pittsfield Parks Speed Skating Club will conduct a "Learn-to-Skate" program beginning Friday, December 26. The program will run through Wednesday, December 31, from 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. at the Pittsfield Boys' and Girls' Club rink.

Skaters are required to wear helmets and gloves; elbow and knee pads are also recommended. They should dress warmly but avoid loose, baggy clothes and long scarves. Skates will be available at no extra charge. No double runner skates are permitted and skaters must be at least 5 years of age.

Registration will be on Sunday, December 14 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. and Tuesday December 16 from 6 to 7 p.m. at the Pittsfield Boys' and Girls' Club rink. Registration is also available weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Springside House, 874 North Street. Cost is \$20 per person with a \$50 family maximum charge.

12/11/03

Learn to Skate program dates set

The annual Learn to Skate program, sponsored by the Pittsfield Parks Speedskating Club in conjunction with the Department of Community Services and the Parks and Recreation Department, will be held this year from Friday, Dec. 26, through Wednesday, Dec. 31, from 11:45-12:45, at the Pittsfield Boys' and Girls' Club rink.

Registration will take place at the rink on Sunday from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m., and Tuesday from 6 to 7. Registration will also be taken at the Pittsfield Parks Commission offices at 874 North St., on Monday and Tuesday from 9 to 4.

Skates will be available at the rink, but no double-runners will be allowed. Skaters should avoid wearing baggy clothes and long scarves. Skaters, however, should wear gloves while elbow and knee pads are also recommended.

The cost is \$20 per individual with a \$50 maximum charge for families.

12/20/03

Downhill racers



Photos by Joel Librizzi / Berkshire Eagle Staff

The Pittsfield 58th Winter Carnival's toboggan races at Osceola Park yesterday provided plenty of thrills and spills. Residents could borrow one of the traditional, wooden toboggans at the park or bring their own.

2/3/03



B8 — The Berkshire Eagle, Saturday, September 20, 2003

Button design contest begins

PITTSFIELD — The Pittsfield Winter Carnival is accepting entries for its button design contest, according to Ron Przedpelski, chairman of the contest.

The contest is open to all students in Pittsfield schools, public and private. The theme of the button design must be related to winter.

Contest applications are available at area schools.

Only an original design will be allowed; no patented characters may be used. Participants should include their name, address, telephone number, school and grade on the reverse side of the design.

Entry forms can be brought in or mailed to the Springside House, 874 North St. by Friday, Oct. 10. Completed applications

also will be picked up from the schools on that day. Winners will be chosen at the Winter Sports Committee meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 15.

Grade categories are kindergarten through second, sixth through eighth and nine through twelve. Prizes will be awarded to each category winner, and a grand prize will be awarded to an overall winner. The overall winning design will be reproduced on a button that is approximately 1 1/2 inches in diameter.

Winners will be awarded at the sports committee meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 5.

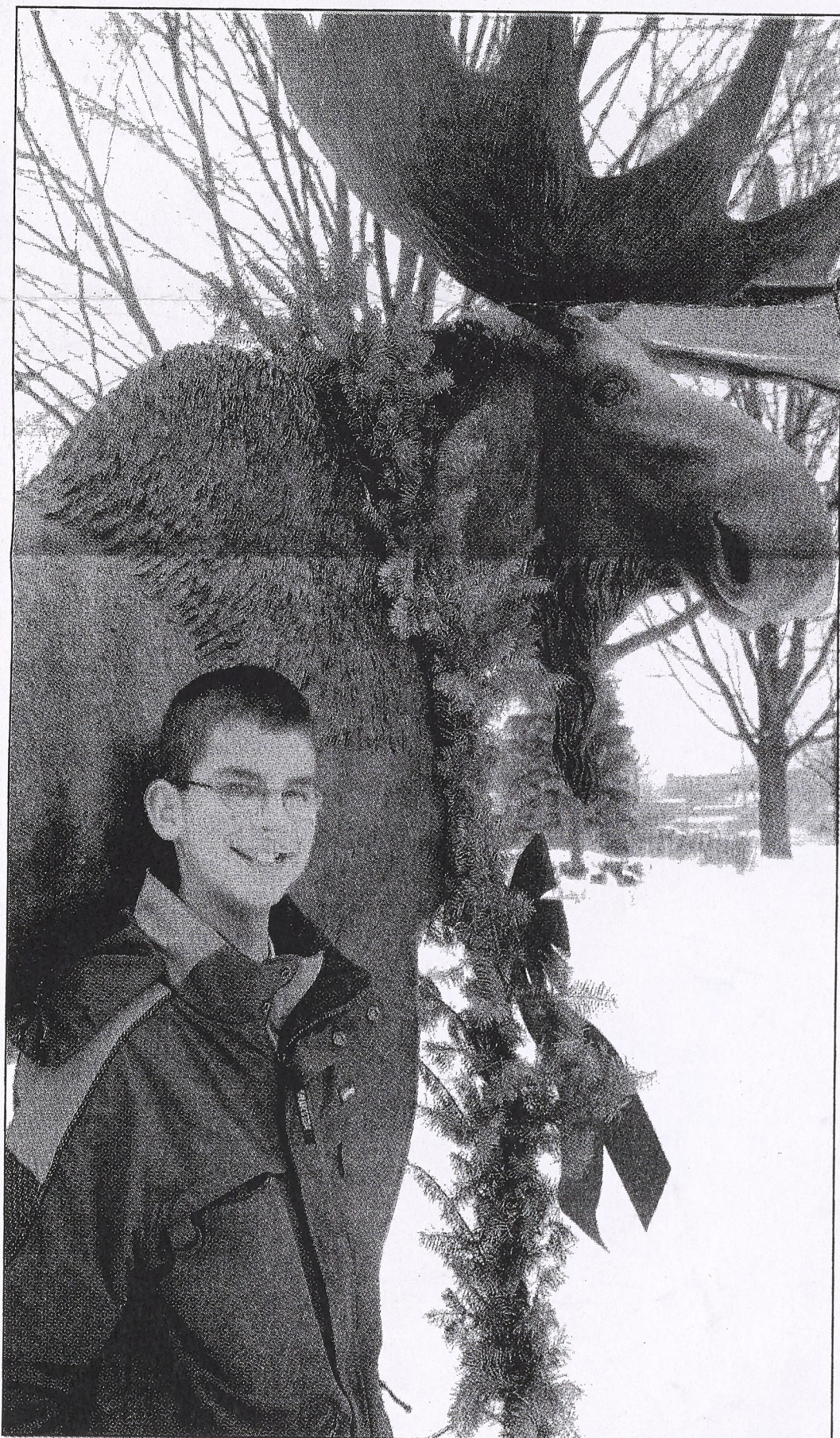
The contest is sponsored by the Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee of the Pittsfield Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation. Buttons will be

sold by carnival queen contestants beginning Jan. 11; the proceeds will help pay for carnival events.

For more information: 443-9343 or Przedpelski at 443-1617.



Can we call him Mel, for short?



Joel Librizzi / Berkshire Eagle Staff
Marc Massery, 12, of Pittsfield stands in front of the moose sculpture in Park Square. Marc submitted the winning entry of Melville in a contest to name the moose, run by the city Department of Parks and Recreation and the Artscape program. A student at St. Mark Middle School, he said he was inspired by a trip to Arrowhead, the home of author Herman Melville. The contest drew more than 150 entries.

The Pittsfield Gazette May 1, 2003

Parks board eyes Wahconah costs

The parks commission will hold a special meeting Monday at 7 p.m. to discuss the Berkshire Black Bears' 2002 expenditures at Wahconah Park.

In December, the commission approved the minor league baseball team's facility expense report, certifying that the Black Bears spent more than \$120,000 to improve the park during their first season.

In lieu of rent, the team's license agreement with the city requires that the Black Bears spend \$150,000 over two years to upgrade Wahconah Park.

Commissioner Gene Nadeau opposed the hurried vote in December, questioning whether expenditures such as concession equipment, cleaning services and restroom supplies should count as capital improvements.

The issue has resurfaced at several meetings. On Monday commissioners spent more than 30 minutes rehashing the facility expense report before deciding to schedule the special meeting to settle the matter.

Nadeau says that the team's bookkeeping was sloppy and that he questions the validity of many expenditures, including a beer cooler, cash register tapes and vague hardware bills.

"We were owed a little bit more than what we got as to an explanation," he said.

tion," he said.

Eleanor Persip agreed that perhaps the board acted initially in haste. "We were not commissioners when this was signed," she said. "It was obviously a done deal... it was signed by another mayor."

But Persip questioned the value of further debate: "What do we do about it now?"

John Marchesi, who was not yet a commissioner in December, says the facility expense report should have been sent first to the commission. He termed the Black Bears' deal with the city "a lousy contract."

Marchesi said the intent of the park investments had been warped. "It should have come for the fields, not toilet paper," he said.

Ward 1 city councilor Rob Tuttle agreed, urging the commission to carefully monitor the situation.

"The money we allow them to deduct, the expenditures, is within your jurisdiction," he said. "It's our tax dollars you're here to protect."

Acting city solicitor Jeff Honig, attending the meeting at the commission's request, said that if commissioners have specific concerns about expenses they should communicate with the Black Bears.

The pact, he said, is "rather written" and open to interpretation. He said

ers of the baseball team have been open to dialogue.

"They're reasonable people," he said.

Community services director Jim McGrath said some items were discussed with the Black Bears and eliminated from the expense report. He stressed that items purchased by the team will remain at Wahconah Park, even if the team leaves.

"The first thing we would do is go down and make sure the possessions of the city of Pittsfield will be at the site," he said.

Nadeau remained unconvinced: "The whole thing just sends up a lot of red flags."

Lacking consensus, the board opted to hold the May 5 special meeting to allow discussion in greater depth.

Commission opposes waste transfer

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Riding the wave

Steven Pizarro, left, and Julio Sanchez ride their mountain bikes through a gigantic puddle in the parking lot at Wahconah Park in Pittsfield. The miniature pond was created by the 4 1/2 inches of rain that have fallen so far this month, including more than an inch in two hours on Monday afternoon in the city.

Joel Librizzi / Berkshire Eagle Staff

8/13/02

Lake concerts set to return

PITTSFIELD — "Live on the Lake," a series of free concerts sponsored by Live 105.5 FM and Greylock Federal, returns to Burbank Park for the second summer in a row. The concerts will be held on Wednesday evenings from 6 to 8, beginning this Wednesday and ending Aug. 27.

Each Wednesday evening will feature local musicians performing from the City Stage on the shores of Onota Lake, next to the Controy Pavilion. The event is free and open to the public. Additional parking and a shuttle bus will be available from the Taconic High School parking lot.

People may pack a picnic or purchase food and beverages on site from Lakeside Catering. New vehicles will be on display from Haddad Motors and Tony's Berkshire Boats.

The concert schedule follows: **July 9** — Pimp; **July 16** — Albert Cummings Blues Band; **July 23** — Northern Spy (formerly Catfish Blue); **July 30** — Holy Water Undertone (Tor/Max Creek); **Aug. 6** — Plum Crazy; **Aug. 13** — Fly by Night; **Aug. 20** — Sounds of Sinatra; and **Aug. 27** — Reverend Tor Band. 7/6/03

Police identify drowning victim

PITTSFIELD — Police yesterday continued their investigation of the circumstances surrounding the drowning in Onota Lake of 18-year-old Jesse M. Brazee of 1083 Tyler St.

Brazee's mother identified her son yesterday, said Pittsfield Police Detective Peter T. McGuire. A pair of kayakers found Brazee's body in the lake early Saturday morning. He was near a rope swing that was popular with teenagers; police suspect that he drowned on the Fourth of July.

McGuire asked anyone who may be able to assist the investigation to contact Pittsfield Police at 448-9700. 7/7/03

Council seeks funds for Wahconah plan

Mayor Sara Hathaway will be asked to appropriate \$2,000 to hire a professional consultant to assist in the application to list Wahconah Park on the National Register of Historic Places.

Ward 7 councilor Joe Guzzo said a "small working group" that did the preliminary application for state recognition wants to assist but desires professional guidance.

"This group is psyched up, we're ready to go," he said.

Councilors voted unanimously to ask that the mayor appropriate the monies. 8/14/03

Lake concerts will return

A lakeside summer concert series at Burbank Park will return in 2004. The parks commission this past week approved plans for the third "Live at the Lake" series, a promotion coordinated by WBEC radio.

The series — held Wednesdays from 6 to 8 p.m. — attracted large crowds this past summer.

"It's been very well received," said WBEC's Peter Barry. "It's a great event and we'd love to do it again."

Commissioner Jane Bresnahan said the concerts are "super" and provide "a great opportunity to come down and enjoy the park."

Bresnahan added, however, that organizers must do a better job to ensure that concert-goers do not park vehicles on the lawns of Lakeway Drive residents.

Community services director Jim McGrath agreed that the radio station must "work closer" with parks officials to address the parking issue.

Barry said that a bus from Taconic High School was introduced last summer but that concert-goers seemed reluctant to utilize the free service.

"We were optimistic the shuttle would alleviate any parking issues," he said.

McGrath also stated that organizers need to better identify event personnel and volunteers. The community services director also said that based on the crowds, additional event-only handicapped spaces need to be designated on Wednesday nights.

WBEC and its cosponsors still must formally reserve use of Controy Pavilion for the dates.

Current park policy doesn't allow reservations until the first of the year, though McGrath wants the commission to consider exceptions.

"For annual recurring events, I'm not sure this makes sense," he said. "There should be a flexible policy."

Commission chairman Mike Filpi won't support a policy change now. "We have to be consistent," he said.

The commission has an established policy about Controy scheduling and — given past controversies — Filpi thinks that allowing select exemptions would result in the board being "dragged through the muck." 12/11/03

Obituaries / B2
Community Notes / B6

THE BERKSHIRES

Wednesday, January 1, 2003

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ONE DAY ON
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Critics believe land swap threatens Wild Acres area

By Bill Carey
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Critics of the planned Pittsfield Municipal Airport runway extension see little redeeming value in a proposed land swap to compensate the Wild Acres sanctuary for lost property.

The longer runway would reduce the existing, 47-acre sanctuary by nearly half, but the land would be recouped — and substantially increased — by lumping together mainly privately owned parcels to the east and northeast. There would be a new entryway from South Mountain Road and new amenities, including a picnic pavilion, athletic field and education center.

Dufresne-Henry, the consulting firm working for the Pittsfield Airport Commission, estimates that nearly \$1 million would be

spent on improving the city-owned sanctuary.

"I think their idea is fine in the abstract," observed Jonathan Lothrop, a leader of Citizens For A Sensible Airport Plan. But in reality, he said, the proposal is compromised by its reliance on eminent-domain takings — a situation that recalls the bruising battle over the failed Pittsfield Civic Authority — and the lack of a plan to maintain what currently is a neglected conservation property.

'Where's the money?'

"If they can't take care of the 40 acres right now, where's the money for the [future] maintenance going to come from?" asked Lothrop.

The runway extension would require major earthwork stretching across both the current entrance to Wild Acres and South

Mountain Road. The latter road would become a dead end, and access to the main part of the sanctuary from the west would effectively be blocked, critics say.

As compensation, a detached, 6.5-acre parcel west of the runway, at the junction of South Mountain and Barker roads, would be converted into a picnic area under the proposed land swap. Taken from the sanctuary in the past, the parcel is contiguous with a 2.68-acre parcel of existing Wild Acres property along South Mountain Road that would remain under the plan.

The earthen wall, depicted in a drawing as rising as high as 50 feet above the existing ground level, would grow out from a runway end that already looms within site of the Wild Acres fishing

WILD ACRES, continued on B4



The pond at the Wild Acres conservation area in Pittsfield is connected. Expansion of the Pittsfield Municipal Airport would hurt the pond, critics claim.

Strange priorities in Park Square

To the Editor of THE EAGLE:

It was 15 years ago this past May 16, that the Vietnam Memorial in Pittsfield was erected in Park Square. Three years previous to that date, the Vietnam Veterans of Pittsfield were denied by the parks department the permission to erect a memorial to our fallen sisters and brothers in Park Square. It was a long (three years) and hard road to get permission to have one built, and it was finally recommended by the historical commission in Boston and urged by the Pittsfield City Council that this memorial be placed.

Within recent years, memorials have been placed in numerous places in the city, which, in my opinion, is very heart-lifting and a true commitment to honoring our fallen veterans by our fellow veterans and our city. But what really puzzles me is what does a moose, a double-headed cork screw and a pussy cat have to do with honoring our veterans?

When permission was granted in 1986, the Vietnam veterans were only permitted an area of 6 feet long and 4 feet high. I'll grant you that we all need some culture in our lives but, these priorities seem strange. In 1983, the Vietnam Memorial was viewed as too modern for that period in time. I hope this doesn't send a negative message to our future generations.

ANTHONY J. MARTINI
Pittsfield, Jan. 2, 2003

The author is a retired sergeant in the United States Air Force and past president of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter No. 65.

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Writers are not allowed to respond to letters critical of their letters. The Eagle does not run letters soliciting funds. The Eagle does not run thank you letters or anonymous letters. Send letters to The Berkshire Eagle, 75 South Church St., Pittsfield, MA 01201.

City should look again at Burbank Park

To the Editor of THE EAGLE:

As someone who walks almost daily through Burbank Park, I was shocked to hear that the caretaker had any responsibilities whatsoever. I have never seen or heard from anyone else that the caretaker was "picking up bird and animal droppings, shoveling, raking and other minor maintenance jobs." In fact, all one has to do is take a walk through Burbank Park, during any season, to see the place littered with animal droppings (particularly dog and geese).

One should also question the modification made by the caretaker to the house. When the caretaker moved into the house, the second floor contained a sliding glass door overlooking the lake. The caretaker has since replaced that beautiful sliding glass door with a regular door. Did the caretaker obtain city permission to make this modification to the house?

With the financial situation of the city, the City Council should be looking at all revenue and expenditures. With almost no responsibilities and no oversight, is the city getting its money's worth by allowing someone to live rent-free for 12 or 13 years in Burbank Park?

KENNETH WILSON
Pittsfield, Feb. 3, 2003

Wild Acres threatened, runway foes say

WILD ACRES from B1

pond.

"As far as I can tell, [the earthwork] can't have trees on it, so there's no hiding it," said Thomas J. Sakshaug, also of Citizens For A Sensible Airport Plan. "What you're losing there is the focus of the park, which is the pond."

Originally a private estate, Wild Acres was loaned to the Izaak Walton League of America, a conservation organization, in 1929 to serve as a habitat for fish and wildfowl. The property has remained in a semi-wilderness state, even as the airport grew nearby. In 1965, the sanctuary was deeded to the Pittsfield Conservation Commission.

Building a new athletic field and pavilion will change the character of Wild Acres, Sakshaug argued.

"It's already been run down so much, and now this?" he asked. "It's going to be so changed; is it worth saving?"

Sakshaug and Lothrop are among neighbors of the airport who are challenging the ambitious, \$20 million runway extension and terminal upgrade project. Jim Riddle, a former Conservation Commission member and city employee, does not live near the airport. But as the volunteer caretaker at Wild Acres, he is also concerned about the planned

runway extension.

"My opinion is that Wild Acres was there well before the airport was ever there. We have basically what I call squatter's rights," said Riddle.

"Everyone's talking about amenities" without thinking ahead to how the facilities will be maintained, he argued. Even with those new facilities, "you're still destroying something that took a lot of years to build up, and you're still going to have the noise and the fumes. [The runway] is going to be right up tight to that pond."

A citizens group, the Friends of Wild Acres, was formed in 1983 to support the city in holding annual fishing derbies for children, disabled children and senior citizens at the pond. Fred Garner Jr., the group's president, said Wild Acres needs attention whether the runway extension proceeds or not.

"No matter which way it goes, Wild Acres has to be looked at because it's a great asset to the community," he said. "It's sad that a big issue like this had to make it focused."

The Friends organization is not taking a position on the airport project. Garner, emphasizing that he was speaking for himself, said he does not believe a longer runway will damage the Wild Acres fishing experience.

"As a kid, going out to the fish-

ing derbies, part of the fun was watching these little planes come in," he recounted. "Jets — that's another story. But it fits. There's always been an airport; there's always been a fishing derby."

Still, Garner said he scolded the airport consultants for not consulting his group prior to a Dec. 5 public meeting on the Wild Acres land swap.

Also left out were Jimmie and Pauline Giacoletto, who own property north of South Mountain Road that would be taken for the runway extension and added to the sanctuary.

"They don't tell you too much. That's one bad thing about" the airport project, Jimmie Giacoletto said, when asked if he had been consulted about the Wild Acres plan.

"It's going to ruin my place if they cut the trees down. But hey, you can't stop progress."

Bertha Howard, whose nephew, Edwin Watroba, owns other private land eyed for the future sanctuary, said Wild Acres should stay where it is.

"This Wild Acres is such a beautiful spot, it should not be destroyed," she said. "They have enough parks in the city — why destroy nature?"

Bill Carey can be reached at bcarey@berkshireeagle.com.

Free outdoor movie series planned in Pittsfield

PITTSFIELD — Mayor Sara Hathaway has announced free outdoor "Movies on the Common" on Friday nights during the months of July and August.

The movies have been arranged by the Pittsfield Parks Commission, with help from the Pittsfield Public Schools Audio Visual Department and funding from local businesses.

All movies are free of charge and will begin at dusk (between 8:30 and 8:45).

Movie-goers are asked to bring

their own blankets, lawn chairs and snacks. Ample parking is available in the city-owned lot across from the Common on First Street.

The lineup for this year's Summer Movie Series on the First Street Common follows:

► July 18 — "A Bug's Life," sponsored by Downtown Inc.

► July 25 — "Inspector Gadget," sponsored by Greylock Federal Credit Union.

► Aug. 1 — "Snow Dogs," spon-

sored by K-B Toys.

► Aug. 8 — "Ice Age," sponsored by Banknorth.

► Aug. 15 — "The Rookie," sponsored by Greylock Federal Credit Union.

► Aug. 22 — "The Master of Disguise," sponsored by K-B Toys.

Those interested may call the Parks Department at 499-9343 or the mayor's office at 499-9321 for more information regarding these or other summer park events.

7/11/03

Councilor asks Bossidy to endorse trust fund for parks

By Jack Dew
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Arguing that a gift to the city's parks trust fund would be the best use of money if set aside in a trust, Councilor at Large Peter Arlos has written to the city's Mayor, Lawrence Bossidy, asking for his endorsement of the effort. After the Council narrowly rejected a plan to bring a baseball team to the city, Arlos said he believed most of the money to build new playground equipment and renovate a number of playing fields in Pittsfield's parks, while setting aside \$200,000 to leverage state and federal grants that require matching funds.

Before the vote was held at the

April 22 meeting, a number of councilors said they felt that the project was contrary to Bossidy's wishes, despite the fact that the petition asking for the money was accompanied by a letter from him endorsing the project.

A former CEO of Honeywell Inc., he gave the \$1 million to Pittsfield after he withdrew his plan to bring a baseball team to the city. When he made the gift, Bossidy, a former star athlete at Pittsfield High School, said he intended the money to be used to improve the city's playing fields. While some of the money has been spent on equipment used in the upkeep of the fields, about \$850,000 remains.

Arlos last week wrote to Bos-

Arlos last week wrote to Bossidy and enclosed a copy of the petition.

sidy and enclosed a copy of a petition that would establish the Lawrence Bossidy Trust Fund for Parks, putting the remainder of the money into an account and preserving it while using interest or any earnings to fund future parks projects.

"I have filed the enclosed petition with the City Council because I do not want to see your generous contribution frittered away on projects that the city should be paying for," Arlos

wrote. "I feel that the contribution could help the city for many years by serving as a model for others to contribute and by making funds available for special park projects over the years."

Bossidy could not be reached for comment yesterday afternoon. In a letter that accompanied the initial request for the money to be spent on the parks, he wrote that he supported the projects and asked that no more than 25 percent of his gift be

spent on playground equipment. The Parks Commission heeded his request.

Parks Commission Chairman Michael Filpi said he believes that Bossidy has already made it clear that he supports the plans to spend the money redoing fields and buying playground equipment. "Obviously, he is in favor of the proposal that we put forward," Filpi said. "I have never received as many phone calls from the public as I did when the council didn't approve this. People just don't understand why it got rejected, and I am working with the councilors, some of whom voted it down, and hopefully we will get this approved."

The first petition failed on a tie

vote of 5-5, with one of the 11 councilors absent. Voting in favor of the parks projects were Councilors Richard A. Scapin, Mark T. Brennan, Ozias "Chuck" Vincelette, Joseph O. Guzzo and Matthew M. Kerwood. Voting against were Arlos, Gerald M. Lee, Peter M. Marchetti, Robert G. Tuttle and James A. Arpante. Ward 6 Councilor Daniel L. Bianchi was absent from the meetings. By council rules, a tie vote means a petition fails.

Council President Scapin said he hopes to resubmit the original parks request at the May 13 council meeting, when Arlos' petition will also be on the agenda.

Jack Dew can be reached at jded@berkshireeagle.com.



Ben Garver / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Berkshire idyll

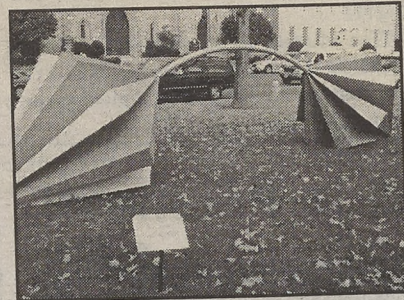
The pre-school-age set whiles away the sunny hours at Burbank Park Beach on Onota Lake in Pittsfield yesterday.

5/21/03

Parks board will shape protocol for sculptures

Parks commissioners are sick of taking flak for other officials' eclectic artistic tastes.

The commissioners plan to create and enforce a rule requiring their review of any sculptures planned for display at Park Square. "Some of the art that's in that park now is atrocious," said commissioner Eleanor Persip.



What is art? Commissioners want a say on Park Square sculptures.

— will consist of shopping carts welded together. Pieces displayed — some for one year — have included animal sculptures, a giant moose and an abstract piece that Persip likened to a broken eggbeater.

"I'm concerned about the length of time art stays there and what types are we going to get confronted with in the future," Persip said. Stracuzzi said that the sculptures are part of the community development department's "Artscape" program, coordinated by city staffer

"It's about time the parks commissioners put their foot down," agreed John Marchesi.

During a review on Monday of rule revisions planned for the downtown park, Persip suggested a specific requirement for commission approval of any sculptures displayed at the park.

Parks foreman Tony Stracuzzi warned that the next sculpture — a political piece anticipated for a brief display

See PARKS page 17

The Pittsfield Gazette February 6, 2003

Board plans to evaluate park art

continued from page 1

Laura Mick in conjunction with Downtown, Inc.

Sculptures loaned for display are insured by the artists, Stracuzzi said, though city workers help with logistics such as transportation of the pieces.

Persip said that the commission should be involved — particularly since commissioners are being blamed for some of the offbeat choices.

"It's getting almost to be the laughingstock of Pittsfield, you can put anything down there," she said.

Jane Bresnahan said the issues are complex, but warrant discussion.

"Who decides whether it's art and appropriate to put into Park Square?" she asked.

Marchesi, the city's longtime director of recreation prior to his retirement, said decisions about placing artwork in the park should be under the commission's control.

"The parks commission always decided what went into Park Square and somewhere along the line... that's gone," he said. "The commission has to put its foot down."

Marchesi said that the parks are under the legal jurisdiction of the commission and the board should not be bypassed on these public art decisions.

Bresnahan said that the commission — which is completing an update of all park rules — can formally require that all art proposals be brought before the commission.

Though no formal vote was taken Monday, the commissioners by consensus asked that community services director Jim McGrath incorporate the art review requirement into the draft they expect to put to a vote on February 18.

Commissioners also suggested that a proposed rule prohibiting the playing of games at Park Square be modified.



The parks commission doesn't want city officials installing any more public art at Park Square without first receiving the board's approval.

fied to allow non-physical games, so someone could play chess or cards at the park.

"That's kind of vague right now," said Gene Nadeau.

Commissioners also want the language of the rules changed to be less "dictatorial."

"I have a problem with the repetition of 'no person', 'no person'," said Persip. "It just sounds like you're dictating... they can be written in a different way."

Bresnahan suggested alternate semantic approaches that focus on the forbidden activity — such as camping — rather than the person.

Inspired in part by the autumn controversy over a planned Park Square wedding, the commission has spent several meetings reviewing updated park rules drafted by McGrath.

At Marchesi's suggestion, the commission plans to revisit the rules every February.



Amenities at Wild Acres include a fishing pond, restrooms and a cabin with a sign identifying it as 'Wilderness Inn.'

Upgrading Wild Acres

Conservation official sees opportunity in airport plan

By Bill Carey
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — If the main runway of the Pittsfield Municipal Airport is to be extended through the Wild Acres preserve, the commission overseeing the preserve is committed to enlarging and improving what is now a neglected recreational facility at the airport's expense.

"Here's an opportunity to refurbish the park at no cost to local folks," said James B. Conant, a member of the city's Conservation Commission. "Instead of dwelling on [the runway extension] as a negative, we'd like to make the best positive outcome we can make."

That outcome, assuming that regulatory, legal and financial hurdles are cleared,

would be a substantially larger but reoriented park with a new access road, athletic field, picnic pavilion and education center.

Boundary changes

The fishing pond that anchors the preserve would continue to be a focal point, but the park boundary, access road and other amenities would be shifted to the east, to what is now privately owned land.

Dufresne-Henry, the consulting firm working for the Pittsfield Airport Commission, estimates that nearly \$1 million would be spent on new amenities. The firm assumes that the money will come from the state and federal agencies paying the lion's share of the \$20 million airport improvement project.

That project calls for extending the airport's main runway, which runs southwest to northeast, and an accompanying taxiway. The length is to be added to the northeast end, taking the form of a large earthwork that would bisect both the current entryway to Wild Acres and South Mountain Road. The latter road would become a dead end.

"There's no question it will be a huge impact" on Wild Acres, Conant said. "You're talking about going through the current parkland. It downgrades the aesthetics."

The Conservation Commission's view is that there should be a "3-to-1 trade for land," he said. "For every acre that they

WILD ACRES, continued on A4

Opportunity seen to improve Wild Acres

WILD ACRES from A1

take, we want to get three back."

The runway extension would reduce Wild Acres by nearly half, taking 21 acres from the existing 47-acre preserve. Dufresne-Henry, in a plan presented in late November to the commission and explained at an informational meeting Dec. 5, has proposed enlarging what remains of the preserve to as much as 190 acres.

Ninety-eight of the 164 proposed new acres — or 60 percent — would come from the Watroba property, whose owners have said they want to keep their land. The balance would be airport-owned property, including a 6.5-acre parcel that was previously taken for the airport. That parcel is on the opposite side of the runway at the junction of South Mountain and Barker roads. It is envisioned as a picnic area.

Wild Acres is the former estate of C. Dudley Holman. It was lent by Holman's wife in 1929 to the Pittsfield chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America "to be used as its headquarters and for the development of fish rearing

and game bird rearing," according to Eagle files.

The conservation organization purchased the property a year later. A separate corporation, Wild Acres Sanctuary Inc., was formed to manage the property, and ties to the Walton League were dissolved in 1933.

In 1965, the sanctuary was deeded to the city. A site plan prepared by Dufresne-Henry shows that 12 acres were lopped off that same year for the airport runway that is now to be extended.

According to Conant, the sanctuary went into steady decline after the passage in 1980 of Proposition 2 1/2, which limits the amount that a municipality can raise in taxes. A citizens organization, the Friends of Wild Acres, was formed in 1983 to support the city in sponsoring annual fishing derbies using stocked trout at the Wild Acres pond.

The current infrastructure consists of a small cluster of buildings, including a maintenance garage, a cinder-block restroom facility and a main cabin, built of logs, with a sign that says "Wilderness Inn." There are a pair

of swing sets and scattered picnic tables and benches, some of which have been cast onto the frozen surface of the pond. The stub-end of the current airport runway rises up to the right as one enters the preserve.

Conant said the Conservation Commission has no budget to maintain the sanctuary.

"Right now, Wild Acres is a forgotten facility," he said. "It's our hope that we can restore the park to something the community will be excited to have."

He cautioned that many regulatory hurdles and potential routes of appeal stand in the way of the airport project. Swapping land to compensate Wild Acres, in itself, will require approval of the state Legislature as required by Article 97 of state law, which protects against the loss of land set aside for natural resource purposes.

But if the runway extension proceeds, "how can we move ahead and keep a recreational facility operating at the highest level it can be?" Conant asked. "You don't just throw in the towel."

12/30/02

Inactivity on parks plan irks Bossidy

By Jack Dew
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The donor of a \$1 million gift to the city's parks said yesterday that he is frustrated with the city's inability to spend the money on much-needed upgrades to the city's playing fields.

Lawrence A. Bossidy, the retired CEO of Honeywell Inc., donated \$1 million to the city after he withdrew his plans to bring a minor league baseball team to Pittsfield in 2001. But two years later, most of the money has not been spent and the work he feels is urgently needed has not begun.

The gift came at the conclusion of a lengthy debate in Pittsfield over whether the city should build a new baseball stadium. Bossidy had hoped to acquire a minor league team to play in the new park, but his plans fell apart when legislation to create the Pittsfield Civic Authority, which would have run the facility, was defeated in a special election.

'Endless negativism'

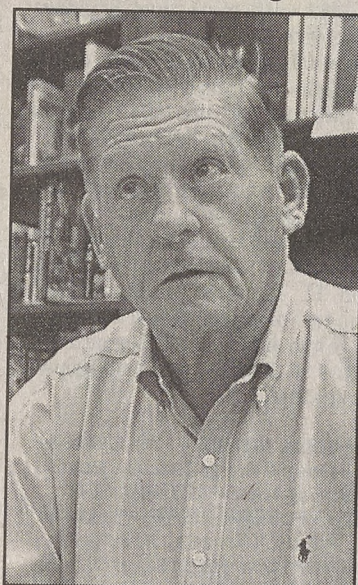
"I was perhaps disillusioned by the situation when I tried to bring the baseball team there, and this is just another example," Bossidy said. "... How does the place ever grow and develop in the midst of all this seamless, endless negativism? And [Pittsfield] has so many virtues to it in terms of its location, its culture, its schools. It is going to take something to galvanize people to get something positive done."

He added, "The purpose here is a simple one: I looked at the playing fields when I was [in Pittsfield] and I was appalled, and I want to see something done."

The Parks Commission has endorsed a slate of projects that would spend about \$550,000 of Bossidy's donation to renovate a number of existing fields and to build a few new ones. About one-quarter of the money would be spent on new playground equipment.

Even though Bossidy had written to the Parks Commission to endorse the projects, the City Council narrowly rejected them, and many of the opposing councilors said they felt the plans were contrary to Bossidy's intent.

Councilor at large Peter G. Arlos, one of those opposed to the projects, wrote to Bossidy last week asking whether the former CEO would prefer that the



Larry Bossidy
Julie A. Brown

money be invested in a trust fund from which interest or other earnings could be spent on the parks.

In a letter to Arlos, Bossidy rejected that plan. "While I understand your interest in calling upon these funds over a number of years, I am concerned about the current condition of Pittsfield's playing fields and hence I am in support of utilizing a large portion of the funds now to cure this condition."

Arlos had said it is the responsibility of the city, not private citizens, to fund the upkeep of the fields. Therefore, Pittsfield should set aside Bossidy's gift to fund "special projects."

Bossidy wrote back, "To your point, the city should appropriate the necessary funds to improve playing fields, however my support for an early expenditure stems from a conviction that this won't happen!"

Arlos to drop trust idea

In a written statement released yesterday, Arlos said he would drop his request for the creation of a trust, an idea he has been touting since Oct. 18, 2001, when he first submitted the proposal to the City Council.

Arlos said he would "support any proposal that earmarks all remaining funds for the repair and rehabilitation of the city's playing fields." That comment would indicate that Arlos will not support using any of the money for

BOSSIDY, continued on B4

Park politics continue but Bossidy Bucks will be spent

continued from page 1

creation of new fields, purchase of new playground equipment, a contingency fund and the development of an investment account.

"I think the parks commission did a great job," said Bianchi. "They had public input and deliberated thoroughly ... I applaud them for their efforts."

Scapin and other council proponents of the proposal kept it alive by referring back to the subcommittee a report relating to the parks plan. The subcommittee on April 9 tentatively endorsed the concept of the investment but recommended "filing" the report due to concerns with Mayor Sara Hathaway's request to authorize the money in one lump sum this fiscal year.

In response to the subcommittee's concerns, Hathaway came forward with a new order — which is the one the full council killed on last week's tie vote.

On Monday, parks commissioners tried to figure out how to proceed given the council's vote.

Commissioners ultimately voted to authorize chairman Mike Filpi to work with the finance subcommittee.

First, however, commissioner Eleanor Persip and ward 1 councilor Rob Tuttle exchanged heated words.

Tuttle appeared before the commission to advocate for the purchase of "a little playground equipment" for West Memorial Park, which is in his district.

"It's a beautiful park," he said of the space on Cheshire Road across from the Allendale shopping center.

"I cannot understand how you can stand before us," she said. "Just last Tuesday you gave a 'nay' vote and rejected our plan."

Persip referenced Tuttle's vote against the \$550,000 Bossidy allocation, which some councilors objected to because it includes playground equipment.

Tuttle countered that his objections to the proposal stemmed from his perception of the commission's math and his belief the Bossidy money should be invested, with expenditures funded only through interest income.

"How can we invest and buy things too," said Persip. "It's one or the other."

"I think the money is burning a hole in certain people's pockets," countered Tuttle.

Community services director Jim McGrath said that it might be possible to shift some existing playground equipment to West Memorial Park, particularly as the city invests in new equipment for some parks.

Tuttle reacted angrily, suggesting that his request was being tied into the rejected plan for new equipment.

"Are you telling me all this hinges on the Bossidy money?" he asked.

"Your petition has merit and we're working on it," said McGrath.

After several more volleys, the commission voted unanimously to support transferring additional playground equipment to West Memorial Park if it is available.

At the end of Monday's meet-

ing, the commission contemplated the future of the Bossidy proposal.

Scapin, in attendance as council liaison, announced that he had scheduled the finance subcommittee meeting.

"I have been hammered by people because this council did not support this money," said Scapin.

He reiterated his support for the proposal. "You have a great plan," he said. "If Dan Bianchi was there I'm sure I would have had my six votes."

The council president said the city should be acting more thankfully toward Bossidy's donation.

"Mr. Bossidy has given us a million dollars," he said. "There's too many games being played here... Let's get on with business."

Chairman Filpi said he too was disappointed by the council's 5-5 vote and had heard from many residents. He outlined a plan to try to build support among councilors.

"I'm working very hard," he said. "I think we should let things fall where they may."

Filpi vowed to lobby councilors at the finance subcommittee meeting and asked commissioners to endorse three commitments that he feels might assuage concerns.

"After the current project is done, we can hold a public review and another input session for the [remaining] money," he said. "Three years from now the needs could be different."

He also suggested quarterly updates on progress so councilors will

know how Bossidy projects are proceeding.

Filpi will also suggest that the finance subcommittee work formally with the parks commission to develop an investment strategy for the remaining money.

"I think this is a pretty good olive branch," he said. "I felt just as bad as everybody last week but sometimes things like that happen ... It's unfortunate but I think we can work it out if we keep them in the mix and keep

cool heads."

After some debate, commissioners supported Filpi's approach.

"We have a plan going with the city council, let's go with it," said Jane Bresnahan. "Let's get it moving."

In addition to a \$100,000 contingency, the general proposal includes:

- Redoing soccer fields at Kirvin Park
- Redoing the Kirvin basketball court

- Redoing the Deming Park baseball field

- Installing playground pieces at Kirvin, Deming, Marchisio, Coolidge and Clapp parks

- Completing a third girls softball field at the Doyle complex

- Redoing the Babe Ruth baseball field at the Doyle site

- Constructing two new fields at Springside Park

- Redoing soccer and softball fields at Clapp Park.



Textile truck

Two large trucks were packed with reusable textiles during this past weekend's textile drive sponsored by the Center for Ecological Technology. Rosemary Coviello and Amy Johns — an Americorps participant — helped process the donations. CET sponsors the program each year during Earth Week.

Officials will support spending Bossidy Bucks

Swing vote Bianchi favors parks plan, Arlos switches based on follow-up



Parks commissioners Eleanor Persip and Jane Bresnahan listen to a discussion on the fate of Bossidy Bucks during a Monday meeting.

Pittsfield will soon cash in Bossidy Bucks after all.

Ward 6 councilor Dan Bianchi, who missed last week's 5-5 vote that killed a proposal to authorize spending up to \$550,000 from a donation Larry Bossidy gave for the city parks, favors releasing the monies.

"I'm going to support it," said Bianchi.

And at-large councilor Peter Arlos — who wanted all the money set aside for investment — plans to reverse his vote against the expenditure, based on a Monday letter from Bossidy.

"While [Larry Bossidy] agrees with me that the city should be living up to its responsibility to fund the parks," said Arlos, "he wants an early expenditure of the funds he has contributed to the city because he is concerned about the condition of the city's playing fields."

Council president Rick Scapin, a proponent of the parks commission's proposal to upgrade fields and playgrounds, has scheduled a Tuesday finance subcommittee meeting to reconsider the issue.

The matter will then be referred back to the full city council for a May 13 vote.

Bianchi — who missed both the finance subcommittee's April 9 meeting and the council's April 22 meeting — says that Bossidy's letter endorsing the general parameters of the plan makes the issue clear cut.

"Is it how I would suggest spending it? Not necessarily," said Bianchi. "But it's just like a will, you try to respect the wishes."

The ward 6 councilor said the parks commission conducted a thorough process to develop a proposal that includes upgrades to existing fields,

5/1/03

See PARK page 9



Berkshire Community College students Michael Esposito and Kerry Heffernan on Sunday fish out debris from the Housatonic River branch abutting Clapp Park.

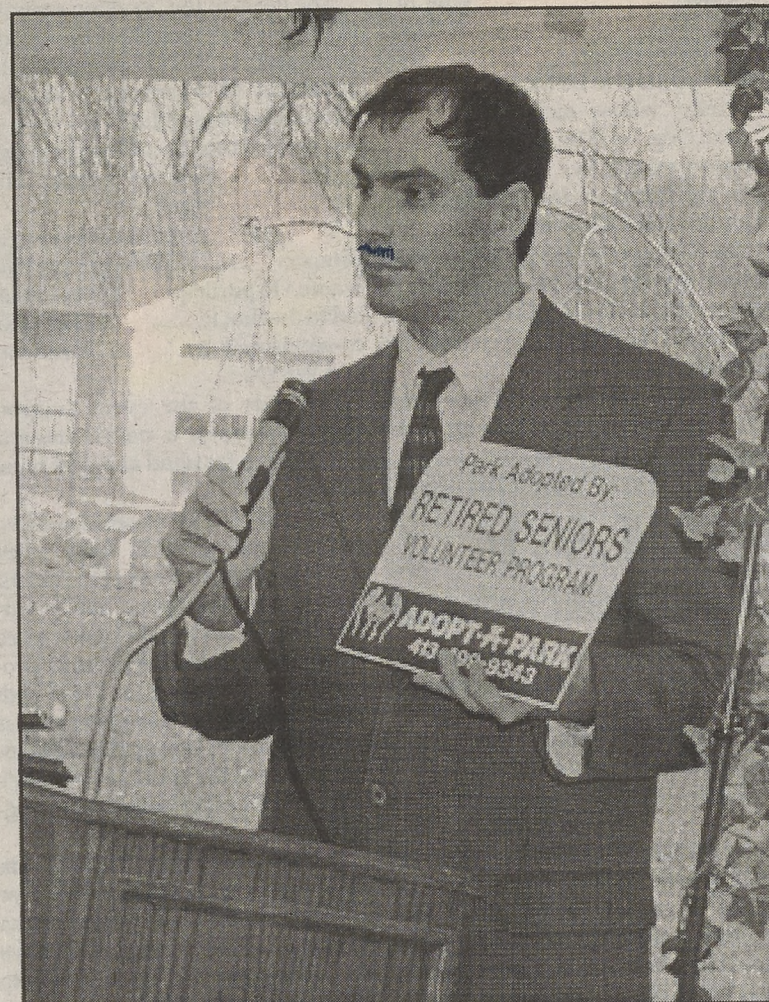


Pittsfield's 2003 Arbor Day celebration included a salute to Arlia "Tommie" Bailey, whose volunteer efforts on behalf of Pittsfield Beautiful were lauded by a contingent of officials and friends. Shrubs were planted at the Hebert Arboretum in honor of both Bailey and the late Margaret Armstrong.



Jesse Littlejohn does the dirty work at Clapp Park as part of a six-park cleanup day on Sunday. While participation in the event was minimal — in part because Saturday's rain postponed the program — work options abounded for the volunteers who showed up.

Park Caretakers



Community services director Jim McGrath on Friday formally initiates Pittsfield's "adopt a park" program. The first organization to sign up, the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program, will take care of the First Street Common. "The program will be tailored to the skills the groups bring," said McGrath. "It's really about community involvement, community stewardship."



Judy Gitelson and Don Fly make the rounds at Springside Park on Sunday, picking up litter — much of it apparently from motorists.

Bossidy upset by inactivity on parks plan

BOSSIDY from B1

playground equipment. Bossidy said yesterday that he still wants the Parks Commission's version of projects — including new playground equipment — to be supported by the council.

About \$150,000 of Bossidy's gift was spent on equipment used in the upkeep of the fields. The Parks Commission plan would cost an additional \$550,000 with a \$100,000 contingency fund to cover any overruns and set aside the remaining \$200,000 to leverage state and federal grants that require matching local dollars.

Arlos said the city should have heeded his advice in 2001, when he asked that all the money be set aside in a trust fund.

The original request from the Parks Commission for the \$550,000 failed by a 5-5 vote at the April 22 City Council meeting. The tie, which by council rules means the petition loses, was possible because one of the 11 councilors was absent.

However, by a procedural quirk, a separate and slightly different version of the commission's request appeared later on the agenda. That request was referred to the Finance Committee, of which Council President Richard A. Scapin is chairman. Scapin has said he hopes to send the petition back to the full council when it meets on May 13, where he hopes it will win approval.

Jack Dew can be reached at jdew@berkshireeagle.com.

Council rejects park projects

Proposal for spending \$550,000 of Bossidy gift fails on tie vote

By Jack Dew
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — A slate of projects that would have renovated fields and added playground equipment to a number of city parks was narrowly rejected by the City Council last night.

The Parks Commission had asked the council for authorization to spend \$550,000 of \$1 million donated by Lawrence A. Bossidy on a host of projects, including new soccer, lacrosse and softball fields in a number of city parks.

The request failed on a 5-5 vote. The draw was possible because one of the 11 councilors, Ward 6 Councilor Daniel L. Bianchi, was not at the meeting. By rule, a petition can only pass if it has the support of a majority of the council.

Councilors opposed to the projects spoke of varied concerns, though a number of them worried that the use of the

money was contrary to Bossidy's wishes.

Bossidy, a native son and the former CEO of Honeywell Inc., made the \$1 million donation in 2001 when he withdrew plans to bring a minor league baseball team to Pittsfield that would have played in a new stadium. At the time, he asked that the money be used for much-needed repairs to the city's playing fields.

Support from Bossidy

Parks Commission Chairman Michael Filpi told the council last night that the projects had been chosen after lengthy debate and public input and that Bossidy had thrown his support behind the plans. Filpi said the commission is eager to begin work, though the projects would take an estimated two or three years to complete. "We certainly want to fix the most needy fields first," he told the council.

Even though a letter from Bossidy supporting the projects was included in the petition, many councilors questioned whether too much was being spent on playground equipment; Bossidy had asked that no more than 25 percent of the funds be used for that purpose.

Still others said the cash would be far better used if the principal were preserved in an interest-bearing account, creating a self-perpetuating pool of money with which the city could pay for parks projects long into the future.

Councilor at large Peter G. Arios said spending the money all at once was the result of the city's "instinct of self-destruction ... In two years, we will run out of money."

Councilor at large Gerald M. Lee said he objected to the proposal because the council would be encumbering money that would be spent over the next few

years, which he said would exceed its proper authority.

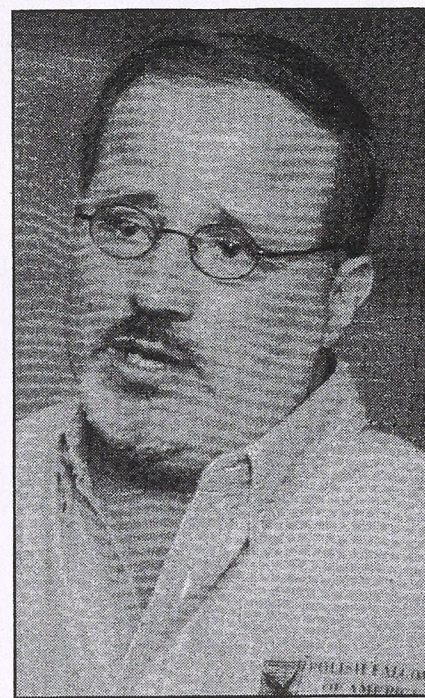
"We are committing to a spending plan for not only this City Council and this administration, but also for future administrations," Lee said. "I think the concept [of the improvements] is great, but I think each project should come in and stand on its own."

Repairs badly needed

Councilors supporting the proposal said the money would fund repairs that the city desperately needs, that Bossidy supports and that Pittsfield would otherwise not have the wherewithal to do.

Ward 3 Councilor Mark T. Brennan said, "I think we are looking a gift horse in the mouth and splitting hairs over where [this money] is going to go, when it should be going into the fields right now."

PITTSFIELD, continued on B4



Michael Filpi, chairman of the Parks Commission, speaks at last night's City Council meeting.

Council rejects park plan

PITTSFIELD from B1

Council President Richard A. Scapin also urged approval, saying the money has been languishing for more than a year while it could have been at work in the parks, fixing decrepit playing fields that he said are becoming a danger to the children who use them. "I really believe that the City Council has to support this. Let's have confidence in our Parks Commission," he said.

Councilors Arios, Lee, Peter M. Marchetti, Robert G. Tuttle and James A. Arpante voted against the petition. Councilors Brennan, Scapin, Ozias "Chuck" Vincelle, Joseph O. Guzzo and Matthew M. Kerwood supported it.

The proposal is not totally dead, however. In a procedural move that will keep the request alive, the council sent an almost identical version of the request to its Finance Committee for discussion. That request could re-emerge on the agenda for a vote when the full council is in session, though it is not clear how Ward 6 Councilor Bianchi, who was absent, stands on the issue.

In other business, the council gave unanimous approval to a new contract with the city's police officers. The agreement calls for retroactive pay raises totaling

abstaining.

The councilors also approved \$25,000 in community development block grant money that will be used to help plan a downtown cinema center being proposed on North Street.

Meanwhile, the councilors referred to its Committee on Community and Economic Development a petition from Mayor Sara Hathaway asking for support for the city's West Side Initiative and to back the creation of a neighborhood steering group.

The West Side Initiative would take run-down and empty houses and either restore them into habitable units or demolish them. It is a major push by Hathaway and her Community Development department to boost the city's poorest neighborhood.

The council also named Kenneth Grady and James Marby to the airport commission by unanimous vote. Filpi's term on the Parks Commission was extended and Brenda Brown was named to the Commission on Disabilities.

4/23/03

Springside Park wedding plan approved

A second summer wedding has been scheduled for a Pittsfield park.

On Monday, the parks commission approved plans for Susan Carrigan and Thomas Doner to hold a marriage ceremony on August 23 at Springside Park.

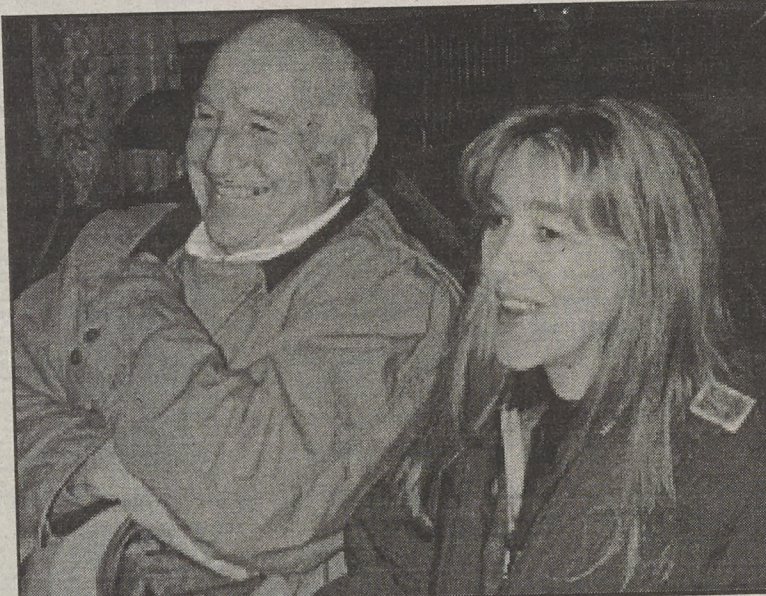
"It's always been a nice place for us, we grew up there," said Carrigan, who attended Monday's meeting with her father, Bill.

Carrigan expects about 80 people to attend the afternoon ceremony, which will be led by a justice of the peace. An evening reception will be held at another location.

Commissioners — who made national headlines after initially rejecting a Park Square wedding request three months ago — posed several questions, but approved the request.

Carrigan said that the couple plans to rent a large tent for the ceremony. "We don't want to take any chances," she said.

After several details were spelled out, the commission unanimously



Bill Carrigan supports his daughter Susan's plan to hold her wedding ceremony at Springside Park.

approved the request.

"Congratulations and good luck," said chairman Mike Filpi. Community services director Jim

McGrath jokingly pledged to ensure the desired atmosphere at Springside Park: "I'll make sure there are plenty of butterflies in the butterfly garden."

2/27/03

Bouton feuds with publisher over Wahconah Park book

Jim Bouton — who is writing a book about his experiences trying to field a minor league baseball team at Wahconah Park — has cried "foul" over allegations of censorship.

Bouton has terminated his contract for the book "Foul Ball" with the small publishing house, Public Affairs.

The south county resident will instead self-publish the book.

"Foul Ball" is Bouton's version of his efforts to field a team at Wahconah Park. According to his announcement, "Bouton recounts his battle against the local power elite, who wanted to build a new stadium to

replace Wahconah Park, a project the citizens had voted against three different times."

"I call it America's most costly hostage crisis," said Bouton. "Team owners say, 'Build me a new stadium or you'll never see your team again.' This is happening all over America. And the politicians help them do it."

According to the announcement, "Bouton takes us along on his wild ride, into the teeth of corporate malfeasance, anti-democratic process, the tyranny of a one-newspaper town, and the real reason why the 'good old boys' want a new stadium."

Bouton says that a lawyer from General Electric invested in Public Affairs and subsequently Bouton was told to remove certain GE-related passages from his book.

Bouton says he refused, and added the material to "Foul Ball," still on target to be available in June.

Bouton was a major league pitcher for the New York Yankees, Seattle Pilots, Houston Astros and Atlanta Braves. His book, "Ball Four" was entered into evidence at the decisive arbitration hearing that led to free agency in baseball, and the New York Public Library included it as one of its "Books of the Century." 4/17/03



Ben Garver / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Around and down

Kyle Hopkins, 4, plays yesterday on a spiraling slide in Kirvin Park in Pittsfield. 5/4/03

Officials support commission's involvement with art in parks

Members of the parks commission who want a say in municipal art displays that involve the parks have the support of Pittsfield's elected officials.

The commission is scheduled to vote Monday on a new rule that will require all public art projects planned for city parks to be brought before the commission.

"It seems reasonable to me that they should have a role," said Mayor Sara Hathaway. "I support them."

Led by commissioner Eleanor Persip, the board on February 3 called for new rules to ensure that they review all art displays in the parks. Persip was motivated largely by sculptures at Park Square that generated comments.

"Some of the art that's in the park now is atrocious," she said.

The art has been placed at Park Square — with the participation of the parks department — by the city's community development department as part of the city's "Artscape" initiative. A volunteer committee, working with city staffers, has selected works through an arrangement with Chesterwood.

Community development director Mark Amuso says the involvement of the parks commission is welcome and that perhaps the parks department may wish to take stewardship of the program.

"From what I understand this is not a non-issue," he said.

The parks commission — which has undergone complete turnover since Hathaway became mayor — has been made aware of the program in the past.

Amuso said it's inevitable that individual pieces of art will garner

mixed reactions.

"Art by its nature has the ability to create some controversy," he said. "That's exactly what art is supposed to do, stir some passions."

Amuso said his department has no desire to bypass the parks commission and that the artscape program should eventually migrate to another home, since the community development office specializes in low and moderate income projects.

"The artscape function that exists in this department was created to get it off the ground," he said. "Ultimately it needs to move somewhere where it would be more appropriate."

City councilors are supportive of the parks commission's desire for involvement, though several councilors stress they aren't advocating censorship.

"Everything that goes on in the park you need permission for and I was under the assumption they already had authority," said Joe Guzzo.

"If they can regulate who gets married there, this seems to be the same," said Gerald Lee.

Peter Marchetti said all aspects of the parks fall under the commission's purview. "Give them a break, that's what they get chartered to do," he said.

Rick Scapin, the council's liaison to the commission, said "it's a great

idea" to ensure the commission has a role in public art.

"It's a courtesy but it's more," he said. "The park commission should know what's going on, they have to look out for the safety there."

Matt Kerwood favors public art initiatives even though "I have not necessarily liked all the choices the artscape committee has been made."

He's not a big fan of random art at Park Square because the city has invested considerable resources "to really beautify the center square of the community."

"We have to be very sensitive how we utilize that space," he said.

Ozias Vincelette said "it sounds like a wise idea" for the parks commission to be in the loop on public art at parks.

"After all they do have the responsibility for the parks," he said.

Peter Arlos said the issue is straightforward. "It's part of their jurisdiction, to supercede them isn't proper," he said.

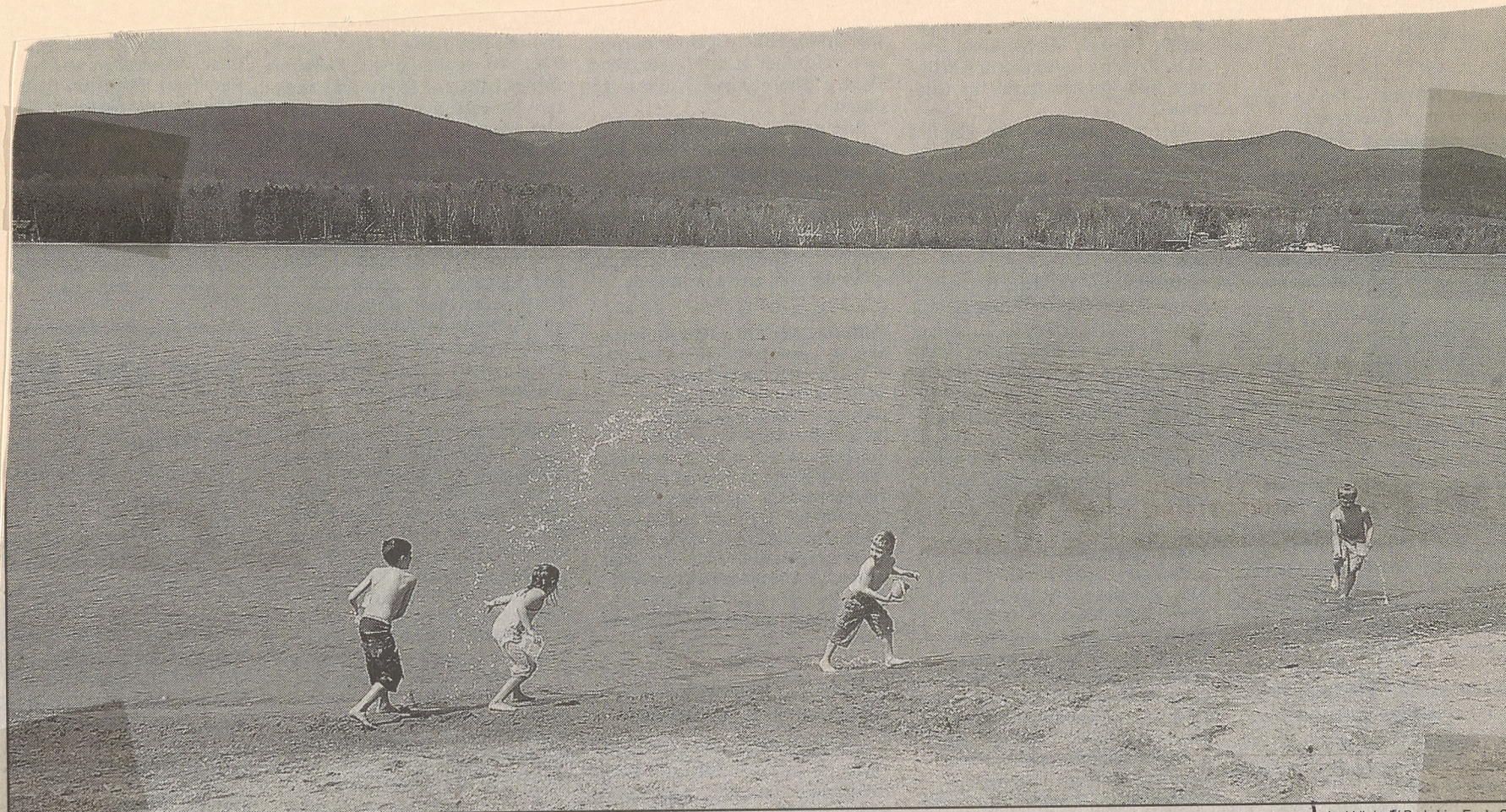
James Arpante said the parks commission should have a role but he also cautioned about the legalities of censorship if the board attempts to establish set standards.

"They have to have clear guidelines," he said. "They can't really regulate the content of the sculptures, only the time and manner of the displays." 3/20/03



Ben Garver / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Members of the Pittsfield High baseball team give the playing field at Clapp Park a going over yesterday afternoon. PHS will open its home season this afternoon against Lee High. 4/15/03



Beach buddies

Yesterday was warm enough for 9-year-old Kyle Baker, left, Keely Baker, 6, Collin Anderson, 8, and Ryder Fairbank, 8, to have a water fight at the public beach at Onota Lake in Pittsfield.

Joel Librizzi/Berkshire Eagle Staff

4/22/83

ROYAL HARTIGAN

Friends of Springside want to preserve natural qualities

Editor's Note: The following letter was sent to city officials regarding a proposal for new athletic fields at Springside Park.

I am writing to you as a member of the Friends of Springside Park and as a citizen of Pittsfield since 1950. My home is at 1068 North Street and borders Springside Park.

The Friends group has been active since the 1960s and was expanded in 1980 as a grassroots organization dedicated to the preservation of the park as a natural resource. We do annual clean ups and beautification, nature walks, and cultural events to celebrate the park's beauty.

We are opposed to the current proposal to place soccer and lacrosse fields at the center of the park. We feel that the original idea of a public park, especially Springside, is to have a dynamic balance of active and specific single-use recreational activities around the periphery with a central major core reserved for multiple public uses: walking, jogging, bicycling, family picnics, bird watching, plant and animal study, and simple enjoyment of nature.

Parks are an irreplaceable resource that once lost are gone forever. Enjoyment and connection with nature is a developed activity and is the essence of what a park is and how the people of Pittsfield, Berkshire County, and New England have always used this unique asset since its donation to the city by the Miller family in 1910. Throughout the park's history attempts have made to compromise the park's integrity and the citizens of Pittsfield have joined together to preserve the park as a natural space.

One current proposal would locate the new playing fields at the core of the park's natural space, the center of the largest meadow, filled with unique plant and animal life, and near a brook that constitutes a wetlands area. This meadow is an essential part of the park's public and multiple use area, with all kinds of daily activities, including nature walks, plant and animal observation, frisbee games, photography, painting, music making, evening sky and star gazing, and personal reflection and enjoyment.

We are not opposed to the development of playing fields,

but to locate these fields in the middle of the largest meadow at the center of the park would destroy its natural beauty, preventing the public from using the fenced-in area for the multiple uses noted above. We feel that there already is a developed area at the northern part of the park near Benedict Road that has the electricity, lighting, water, and toilets that a series of playing fields would require.

The Benedict Road area also has a paved road and parking lot that the proposed area does not, thus saving the proposed area from unnecessary paving, new parking lot construction, and the traffic and noise that would accompany them, and effectively destroy the park's essence. With the addition of a new softball field this year, the park will have four fields at the Benedict Road site in addition to the two (basketball and a complete little league complex) near Springside Avenue. This total of six major athletic field areas is already limiting the natural aspects of the park and seems to be a tolerable maximum percentage of the park for single-use athletics.

We also realize that the creation of yet more fields in this disrupted central area could lead in future years to the development of even more intrusive projects that would wipe out the park entirely, such as lighting, toilets, paved roads and parking lots, and eventually destructive activities like a golf course, more playing fields, and other restrictive single-use activities. We feel that the heart of the park is for multiple use by all the citizens of the area, and should not be artificially limited to organized league players. A park is a public resource for enjoyment of all, not a private development for the

benefit of the few.

We request that the Park Commission consider locating the new fields that Mr. Bossidy has generously made possible either at another area or Pittsfield Park that may not have any present fields, or at the Benedict Road area near the present athletic complex, which already has in place the necessary infrastructure of electricity, lighting, water access, toilets, roads, and parking lots.

The location of the proposed fields at another park with less or no trees, no sloping plain, and less unique natural habitat would seem the most logical and efficient way to use the funds since it would require far less transformation costs. The land excavation, grading, and preparation near the present Benedict Road complex would not be significantly different than the proposed meadow area, since the meadow area is a hilly area with a natural slope and many trees.

The placement of the new fields at these alternate sites would insure the efficient use of Mr. Bossidy's funding at a lower cost, allow for new fields, and leave undisturbed the priceless public multiple-use natural resource that the major central part of Springside Park has always been. In fact, the location of unfenced fields as part of the Reid Middle School lawns behind the school would offer another alternative, allowing easy access via the existing school roads and open spaces that could be linked to school athletic uses.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to helping maintain Springside Park as a unique natural resource for all the citizens of Pittsfield.

Bossidy donation eyed for upgrade of parks

By Jack Dew
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The City Council will be asked on Tuesday to endorse a slate of major park improvements that will be financed entirely with money given to Pittsfield by native son Lawrence A. Bossidy.

The projects would cost an estimated \$550,000, and would build new soccer, lacrosse and softball fields in a number of city parks while upgrading playground equipment and buildings.

If approved by the council, the money would come from a \$1 million gift made by Bossidy, the former CEO of Honeywell Inc., to the city's parks system. Bossidy, who has in the past voiced concerns about how his gift was being handled, has sent a letter to the Parks Commission endorsing the slate of projects.

Bossidy wrote to Parks Commission Chairman Michael Filpi on March 7, "You are correct in assuming that the main intent of my donation was to improve and preserve the city's playing fields. Hence, I'm delighted to learn that several parks will be the recipient of much needed upgrades."

The list of projects includes renovating a number of city fields, including the soccer field and basketball court at Kirvin Park, the baseball diamond at Deming Park, and the soccer field at Clapp Park.

The city would also construct a third softball field at the Doyle Memorial Complex, and build two new soccer and lacrosse fields at Springside Park, where it would also install bathrooms at a ball field.

Parks projects in Pittsfield have at times become controversial as residents and athletic groups argue over which parks are the most deserving. The projects being proposed now were only suggested following a public input session and extensive discussion among the commissioners.

Director of Community Services James McGrath, who oversees Pittsfield's 24 parks, said the money will be spent on "the playgrounds that need new, updated equipment the most. The fields we are upgrading are the ones that are the most heavily used in the city and the ones with the greatest safety concerns."

"This is a wonderful windfall, a magnificent gift that Mr. Bossidy has left to the city and we are looking to spend it appropriately," McGrath said.

\$200,000 for matching funds

The request to the council would also set aside an additional \$200,000 that could be used to attract state and federal grants that require the city to match all or a portion of the public money with dollars of its own. Filpi said he hopes the existence of that fund will encourage the broader community to invest in the parks and help prop them up during what is expected to be a difficult budget year.

While an earlier version of the parks

FUNDS, continued on B5



Eagle file

I'm delighted to learn that several parks will be the recipient of much needed upgrades.

— Larry Bossidy

Mayor stunned by rejection of city parks plan

By Jack Dew
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Despite a narrow defeat in the City Council last Tuesday, Mayor Sara Hathaway and the Parks Commission are not likely to change a slate of projects that would renovate fields and add playground equipment to a number of Pittsfield's public parks.

The council rejected a list of projects that would have been funded with \$550,000 from a gift of \$1 million made by city native Lawrence A. Bossidy, the former CEO of Honeywell Inc. Included on the list were plans to build or restore soccer, lacrosse, baseball and softball fields at a half-dozen parks.

The proposal died on a 5-5 vote at Tuesday's meeting, stunning City Council President Richard A. Scapin, Hathaway and Parks Commission Chairman Michael Filpi. Foremost among the op-

4/17/03 MAYOR, continued on B4

Mayor stunned by rejection of parks plan

MAYOR from B1

posing councilors' concerns was a fear that the plan went against Bossidy's wishes, despite the fact that a letter from Bossidy endorsing the projects was attached to the spending request.

"I was astounded that they considered this controversial," Hathaway said Friday. "I thought Mr. Filpi did a fine job of explaining away the concerns that some councilors had raised, and I felt that this was an example of how not to treat the Parks Commission and how not to treat a donor who has been waiting patiently to see the fruits of his gift. I was amazed."

Despite the loss on a tie vote, which was made possible because Ward 6 Councilor Daniel L. Bianchi was absent, a version of the proposal is still legislatively alive. For procedural reasons, a slightly different petition was on the council's agenda last Tuesday. It

was referred back to the council's finance committee.

Scapin, who is chairman of the finance committee and a strong supporter of the projects that have been proposed, said he hopes to schedule a meeting soon and to reapprove the parks plan in time for it to appear on the agenda of the council's May 13 meeting.

"I was shocked at what I was hearing [at last Tuesday's council meeting]," Scapin said. "The thing that upset me most is that Mr. Bossidy has been keeping a close eye on what's going on. ... He has got to be sitting there saying, 'What is up with these people? I gave them \$1 million and they don't even know how to spend it.'"

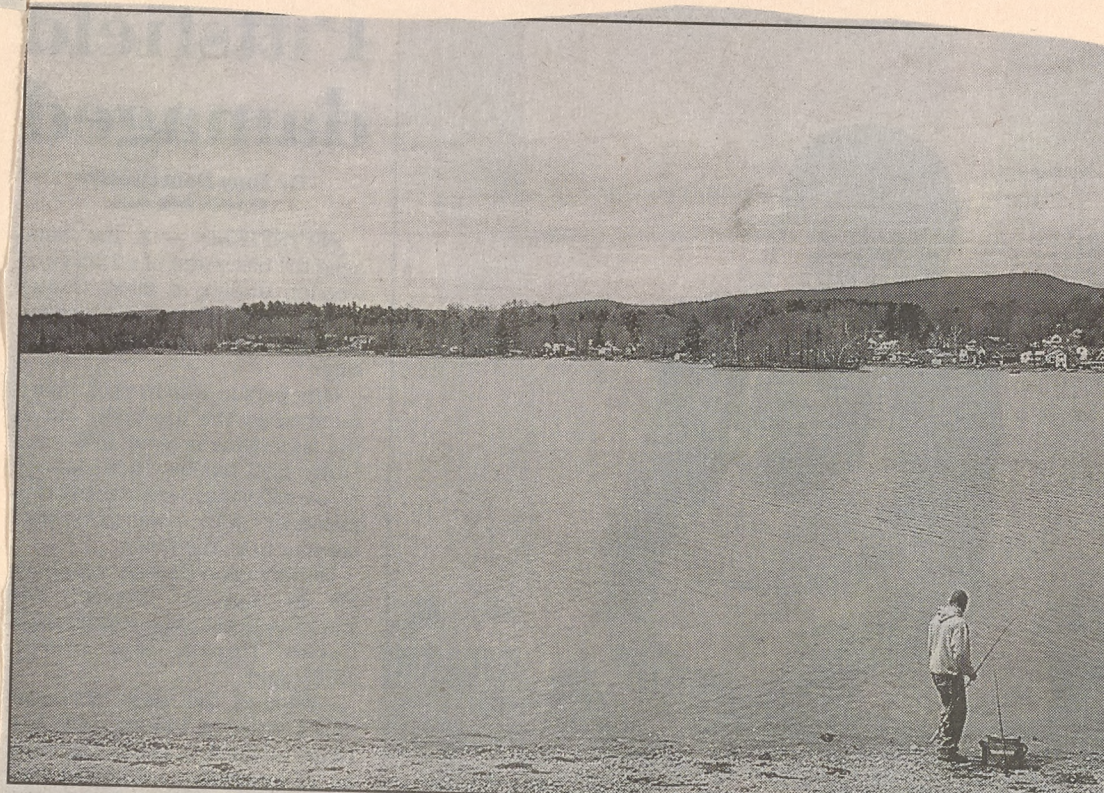
Bossidy, a former star athlete at Pittsfield High School, gave the money to the city after he dropped his effort to bring a minor league baseball team here. Pitts-

field has spent some of the money on equipment used in the upkeep of the fields, but the bulk of the gift has sat in the city coffers, earning interest while the Parks Commission has tried to decide how to spend it.

The proposal sent to the council was the result of several months of work by the commission, including a meeting to gather public input. Filpi had written to Bossidy to determine whether the retired CEO would support using a portion of the gift to buy playground equipment. Bossidy responded that no more than 25 percent should be used for that purpose, and the rest should be spent on the playing fields.

The commission agreed, and submitted a request to the council in which 23 percent would have been used for playground equipment.

Jack Dew can be reached at jdew@berkshireeagle.com.



Ben Carver / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Ice free

Fisherman Jeremy Brown of Pittsfield walks along the shore of an ice-less Pontoosuc Lake on Thursday. According to Eagle files, the earliest ice-out date for the lake — based on anecdotal reports — was March 26 in 1913 and again in 1995. The latest, April 30, was recorded in 1940.

The Bossidy bucks

When Larry Bossidy donated \$1 million to the city, The Eagle warned the generous former Pittsfield resident that he would have to endure the spectacle of the Pittsfield City Council nitpicking over what to do with his gift. Tuesday night, the council parsed letters from Mr. Bossidy like scholars poring over an ancient hieroglyphic before voting to do nothing. The plan presented by Parks Commission Chairman Michael Filpi has been endorsed by Mr. Bossidy and is in essence a good one. The city's parks have been slowly deteriorating and need to be rehabilitated. This means more than just playing fields within the parks, and no more money should be poured into Wahconah Park, which has already soaked up far too much city money at the expense of the city's public parks. Spending plans on the parks should be made for the long term. Councilor Gerald S. Lee argued that the council should not commit future councils to its spending plan, but in fact the council regularly makes decisions that future councils must live with. The city once had a collection of beautiful

parks. Its residents, in particular its children, deserve to have beautiful parks again, and the city should act quickly on using the Bossidy funds to make that a reality.

Bossidy Bucks proposal endorsed but not funded

A general plan to spend the Bossidy Bucks passed muster Wednesday but the logistics continue to confound city officials.

The city council's finance subcommittee endorsed the basic parameters of a plan to spend \$550,000 of a \$1 million gift Larry Bossidy gave to boost the city's parks.

But the subcommittee recommended that Mayor Sara Hathaway's official order releasing the money be rejected.

"These darn million dollar contributions really do throw us for a loop," said ward 4 councilor Ozias Vincelette.

The parks commission last month approved a field upgrade and playground equipment plan with an estimated \$550,000 budget.

Mayor Sara Hathaway endorsed the plan and the finance subcommittee on Wednesday — despite some misgivings about particular elements — added its affirmation.

But finance subcommittee members heeded a warning from treasurer G. Richard Bordeaux that approving the \$550,000 order now — with two months left in the fiscal year — could have complications if the money isn't spent or encumbered by June 30.

Avoid loss of interest

"There's a great deal of sensitivity about this Bossidy fund and the interest," said Bordeaux.

The treasurer says that if the \$550,000 is removed from a special account it stops earning interest. And if it is removed and not spent, separating it from the city's general funds could prove complex.

"If that money isn't encumbered and you move it over, you have a real problem," said Bordeaux. "I would strongly suggest you deal on an as-needed basis, that way you're earning interest."

The fund currently has about \$843,000 remaining; some \$181,000 was spent in 2001 on parks department vehicles and related equipment.

After considerable discussion, at-large councilor Gerald Lee successfully moved — over the objections of council president Rick Scapin — to endorse the general plan but not the \$550,000 mayoral order.

The commission's plan — largely created by community services director Jim McGrath and parks maintenance foreman Tony Stracuzzi — targets major field work at Kirvin Park, Deming Park, Clapp Park, the Doyle softball complex and Springside Park. It also includes playground expenditures at several parks.

"We've tried to be responsive to community input," said McGrath.

Lee questioned a vague proposal to spend \$20,000 at Coolidge Park and a plan to spend \$10,000 for a restroom at Springside Park.

"With those exceptions I think Mr. Bossidy's intent is being heeded," said Lee. "It would seem to me that the Bossidy money was never intended for a restroom."

McGrath said the unspecified Coolidge investment is based on community requests and that "there clearly is a need." The restroom, to be located in a concession stand planned by the North Little League, would serve all of Springside Park and a proposed handicapped-accessible playground.

Ward 3 councilor Mark Brennan questioned why certain fields, including one used for youth baseball at Marchisio Park, weren't included.

He would prefer field upgrades to playground equipment at some sites. "The minor league fields are just horrible," he said.

McGrath said that decisions reflect which fields "are the most heavily used by the leagues." He explained that "we had to sort out where the real need was, where there were safety concerns."

Investment questions

Another discussion point is a plan to leave at least \$200,000 unspent for future investment and to possibly leverage other grants.

At-large councilor Peter Arlos wants more saved and less spent. "If we want to have this fund in perpetuity, we should establish a trust and not spend the principal," he said. "Otherwise there won't be any funds in three years."

Lee countered that the parks need an investment now and that was Bossidy's intention.

"He said use it for the kids, he didn't say put it in the bank," said Lee.

Parks commission chairman Mike Filpi said he wants to see progress but he also wants the money maximized as work advances. "If I can save this parks commission \$3 by getting someone [volunteering] there to save labor, the savings will go back to the investment account," he said.

Parks commissioner Gene Nadeau said that fields should be the top priority, not playground equipment. He noted that Bossidy specified that not more than 25 percent of any allocation should go toward playground equipment.

"We're treading on dangerous territory there," he said, as the \$550,000 plan is weighted to more than 25 percent for equipment.

Scapin said that the 25 percent instruction must be respected. He commended the efforts to prepare the spending plan.

"This is money well spent," said the council president.

By following Bordeaux's suggestion to mete out money as specific elements of the plan are finalized, Scapin said there would be assurances of careful scrutiny.

"It's going to come out a little bit at a time, there's going to be checks and balances," he said.

The finance subcommittee's recommendation to endorse the plan but not approve releasing the \$550,000 will be referred to the full city council.

Parks foreman Stracuzzi said this approach can work, allowing the development of specific plans for the release of the first installment.

"We can go out and get more prices and estimates," he said.

City parks up for 'adoption'

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The Common on First Street is among the first of the city's public parks to be "adopted" under a newly launched program sponsored by the Parks Department.

The aim of the Adopt-a-Park initiative is to "marry the skills and talents of volunteers with the needs of a particular park," said James R. McGrath, Pittsfield's director of community services.

The Retired Senior Volunteer Program recently adopted the Common, McGrath said.

Several organizations

"The RSVP folks are doing things like painting wooden signs. They also are a presence in the park, reporting maintenance problems that need to be attended to," he said.

Other organizations have signed on to adopt various parks, McGrath said, including the

Hebert Arboretum (Springside Park) and the Christian Center (Tucker Park). The Scalise family has adopted Pontoosuc Lake Park, which is situated near the family's property on Hancock Road.

All of the city's parks and conservation properties are eligible for adoption by groups or individuals, McGrath said.

Litter, graffiti

Those wishing to adopt a park must sign a one-year agreement that specifies the duties that will be performed and that estimates the number of hours that will be spent in a particular park every month.

Volunteers set their own schedules, but the agreement requires them to work in a park at least four times per year.

Picking up litter, removing graffiti, sweeping courts and pathways, pulling weeds, raking leaves and caring for trees are

among the tasks volunteers can perform.

Large-scale maintenance jobs, such as the overhaul of a playing field, will not generally be undertaken by volunteers, McGrath said. Volunteers also are encouraged to bring their own tools; the Parks Department provides such items as gloves and plastic bags.

"This is a way to encourage stewardship of our parks and augment the work of the Parks Department," said Councilor at large Matthew M. Kerwood, the author of a petition concerning the program. "It's also an excellent opportunity for organizations — scouting comes to mind, but that's just one example — to achieve their own goals by having people work together."

Additional information about the Adopt-a-Park program is available by calling the Parks Department at 499-9343. The department also has a Web site: www.pittsfieldparks.org.

Commission OKs report on Black Bears' expenses

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — A report of expenses incurred by the Berkshire Black Bears baseball club has been approved by the Parks Commission — with some modifications.

The vote at Monday night's meeting was two in favor and one opposed; two of the five members of the commission were absent from the panel's meeting at Springside House on North Street.

Action delayed

Last week, the commission delayed action on the expense report, which is a key element of a license agreement between the Northern League team and the city as the owner of Wahconah Park. The agreement provides that the team spend a minimum of \$150,000 on improvements to the park during the pact's two-year term. The expense report is the official documentation of those costs and is subject to the Parks Commission's approval.

At a meeting on April 29, parks commissioners Eugene Nadeau and John C. Marchesi said they had questions about some of the items that the Black Bears claimed as expenses in the report. Among the items were new concession equipment and \$3,500 for recycling costs.

On Monday night, Nadeau, who voted against acceptance of the report, said he did so because he wants firmer assurances that the team will not seek reimbursement from the city for expenses that exceed \$150,000.

Nadeau said that while he is aware that Michael Kardamis, the team's president and general

manager, was quoted in The Eagle as having said that the team — not the city — would absorb any expenses that exceed \$150,000, he would like to see that declaration in a legal document, perhaps in a supplement to the license agreement.

"Nothing against The Eagle, but it's not a legal document," he said.

Nadeau also criticized the expense report, contending that it does not detail the financial information clearly enough.

David Potts, the longtime advocate of Wahconah Park rehabilitation, urged the board to "stick to the contract" by invoking a clause that requires the parties' communications concerning the contract to be in writing.

Maintenance Foreman Anthony Stracuzzi told the commission that he was present at a meeting between Kardamis and James McGrath, the city's director of community services, during which he said Kardamis laughed at the suggestion that the team might seek reimbursement from the city.

The commission, said Stracuzzi, "should take the man at his word."

McGrath said that Kardamis "has been put on notice" that future expense reports must be in a format that adheres more closely to generally accepted standards of financial reporting. He also noted that the license agreement makes no provision for the team to seek reimbursement from the city for expenditures in excess of the agreed-upon limit.

The commissioners agreed Monday night that the license agreement needs improvement.

However, they were uncertain about how to remedy what they see as its defects, which include a lack of specific language concerning goods and services that may be claimed as improvements to the park and charged against the \$150,000 minimum.

Parks Commission Chairman Michael Filpi urged his colleagues to accept the report and rely on McGrath and Stracuzzi to safeguard the city's interests under the licensing agreement.

To do otherwise, said Filpi, would send a message to the Black Bears and to teams that may succeed it in Wahconah Park that "you can't get anything done" in Pittsfield.

If the expense report were to be sent to the City Council's audit committee, Filpi predicted, it would move indefinitely "in a circle" between boards, committees and commissions.

'Trying to fill seats'

"We're just tying these people's hands," Filpi said of the Black Bears' management. He said that the team should be allowed to proceed with the work of attracting people to Wahconah Park and "trying to fill seats."

Parks Commission member Eleanor Persip said that while she believes the license agreement is deficient, she does not know "where we go from here" to improve it.

Persip voted in favor of Filpi's motion to approve the expense report with a recommendation that the Black Bears provide another report at the end of the playing season and that the team give written assurances that it will not seek reimbursement from the city for expenditures that exceed \$150,000.



As traffic whizzes by, couple tie the knot

By Bill Carey
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Stacey Carver vowed yesterday "to love Allen despite his many flaws," and Allen Harris Jr. promised "to accommodate Stacey by providing vacations, foot rubs, house-keeping and any other request she deems reasonable and appropriate."

Carver and Harris thus entered into the annals of matrimony in a ceremony that will be remembered less for the solemnity of the vows than for the location — Park Square, that blissful, traffic-encircled oasis in the heart of downtown. More than 100 people attended.

Better known for peace demonstrations and intriguing sculpture, the park was gussied up for a wedding after the city's Parks Commission relented from

an earlier, disapproving vote and gave its blessing to the ceremony. But the permission applied only to Carver and Harris, counseled the liability-conscious board.

That pretty much was the arrangement with the minister, who wasn't a minister.

"I was approved by the governor to serve as a one-day officiate," said Tom Fahey of Dalton, a friend of the bride and groom.

"I don't think that's the proper term, but we got permission for one day" to join the couple in matrimony, Fahey added. "Allen and Stacey did all the paperwork. It was easy."

Does Fahey have clerical aspirations? "No, it was pretty much me or my

COUPLE, continued on B4



Top, Allen Harris Jr. of Dalton looks at his watch 10 minutes before his wedding to Stacey Carver of Dalton, as his father, Allen Harris Sr. of Dalton, and Jan Clark of Peru look on in Park Square in Pittsfield yesterday afternoon. Middle, longtime friend Tom Fahey of Dalton officiates at Harris and Carver's wedding ceremony. At right, Harris and Carver leave Park Square as husband and wife after the nuptials.

Photos by Julie A. Brown /
Berkshire Eagle Staff



DAVID J. POTTS

Bossidy Bucks shouldn't be misused

Mr. Bossidy's generous donation on September 28, 2001, was accompanied by a letter — instructions, if you care to interpret it as such.

In my opinion, the letter was pretty self-explanatory. It read, "I am enclosing a check for \$1 million, payable to the City, but directed to the Parks Commission for the preservation and improvement of the City's playing fields, including Wahconah Park, if Cliff Nilan deems appropriate." (Cliff Nilan was Chairman of the Parks Commission at the time of the donation)

On July 9, 2002, Mr. Bossidy sent a letter to Mayor Hathaway, which paraphrased, demonstrates Mr. Bossidy's frustration in attempting to clarify the intent of the donation. It read, "I have been requested on several occasions to restate that the funds were to be used exclusively, for the preservation and improvement of the City's playing fields." "I would hope that the youth of the City would be allowed the joy and contentment offered by well constructed and properly maintained playing fields."

December 4, 2002, there was a meeting held to gather public input on how the community felt the donation should be utilized. Several suggestions were heard and taken under advisement by the Board of Park Commissioners. The predominant suggestion was to follow the instructions.

Observing the progress of the Parks Commission and the Community Services Director in drafting a plan expenditure, I wrote a letter to the park commissioners, suggesting that once they were a new commission they send a letter, written by Chairman Filpi to Mr. Bossidy both thanking him for the gift and expressing his desire to comply with the intent of his donation.

It was my opinion that providing him a preview of the "drafted plan of expenditure" would solicit further clarification of the intent.

My suggestion was discussed at the next park commission meeting and it was decided that a letter would be sent to Mr. Bossidy through Chairman Filpi.

In a return letter dated March 7, 2003, Mr. Bossidy reiterated, "You are correct in assuming that the main

tion to do so.

I believe it was only through the "power of suggestion" that Mr. Bossidy lent his support to that proposal. Furthermore, by stating that he would like no more than 25% of any one-years disbursements to be used for this purpose, it's safe to assume that Mr. Bossidy expects the donation will be around for more than one year.

The current "Plan of Expenditures"

I don't believe the intent of the donation was to subsidize the budget.

intent of my donation was to improve & preserve the City's playing fields." "With respect to whether donated funds could be used to acquire playground equipment, it is important to inform you that I support this proposal." "Nonetheless, I would like no more than 25% of any one-years disbursements of these funds be used for this purpose."

Mr. Bossidy's response to the proposal to use a portion of the donation towards assisting in creating a "Boundless Playground" at Springside Park was as follows: "I've always been supportive of physically challenged children. However, it is my view that funds for construction of an all access playground should be provided either by the city or the state. Therefore, I am not in agreement with this proposal."

I suggest to the city council that the request for authorizing the use of \$550,000 from the "Bossidy Parks Donation" account, is partially in contradiction to the intent of the donation. The purchase of playground equipment lies within the ability of the city to fund the Park Department's budget. I don't believe the intent of the donation was to subsidize that budget or replace the city's obligation

has the remaining \$850,000 already earmarked for disbursement yet there's no way all these projects can be accomplished this year.

I would also point out the expenditure of \$10,000 for (accessible bathrooms for the Boundless Playground) at Springside Park.

This expenditure is in direct contradiction with Mr. Bossidy's response on the subject.

It's a deliberate attempt to circumvent Mr. Bossidy's wishes and funnel a portion of the donation into a project contrary to the intent of the bequest.

There's several avenues of funding available to the Boundless Playground project and the park commission has already provided one of them by donating a portion of a city owned park for construction of the playground. KayBee toys has made a donation towards the project and I've personally provided the contact numbers of two other possible corporate donors.

The Parks Commission and the City of Pittsfield would be well advised to use Mr. Bossidy's gift in the manner in which it was intended and not allow it to become a "Campaign Prop" in the upcoming election.

7/13/03

Couple wed in Park Square

COUPLE from B1

friend Jer" — Jeremy Smith, the best man, he explained. "One of us had to be the best man and one had to do the ceremony."

Smith, dressed in the wedding-party standard black tuxedo and sneakers, came over to pay his respects. "We've been calling him 'Friar Fahey' the whole time," he offered.

As the crowd was serenaded with classical music by The Rosamund Trio, Fahey, who uses a wheelchair, took up position under a tree at the end of a temporary runway marked out with silk ribbon.

"I think it's lovely," observed a woman who was visiting from New York and passing by the park. "Is this common — people getting married at this spot?"

At the appointed moment, a stretch limousine operated by Transport the People Inc. pulled up at the northeasterly edge of the park, and wedding principals began to file out. Last to alight was Carver, dressed in an ivory dress and carrying a matching bouquet of Vendella roses and blue hydrangea.

Accompanied by her father, Ronald Carver Sr., she walked the grassway to where Harris, dressed in a black tuxedo, white preacher-collared shirt and matching white sneakers, waited with

The groom was dressed in a black tuxedo, white shirt and white sneakers.

the rest of the wedding party.

Fahey used a microphone to be heard over the playful summer breeze and circling traffic.

"The tradition of the wedding ceremony spans the world and transcends time. ... It has been the pursuit of this same everlasting bond that has forged the romantic and memorable ties of Romeo and Juliet, Samson and Delilah, and Bill and Hillary," he pronounced.

It was over within minutes — the Dalton couple kissed passionately and repaired to another corner of the park for photographs. There was some brief tension over transportation arrangements as the crowd broke up, but Carver kept a stiff upper lip. "Everything was pretty perfect," she said, beaming.

Just then, someone shouted from a passing car: "Congratulations!"

A reception followed at the Crowne Plaza.



Julie A. Brown / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Sunset serenade

The late-day sun shines on Pittsfield's 'Live on the Lake' concert yesterday at Burbank Park on Onota Lake. The concert series, now in its second year, is sponsored by Live 105.5 FM and Greylock Federal Credit Union. Performing yesterday was Pimp, a rock group. Next week, July 16, will bring the Albert Cummings Blues Band to the lake.

City to be in commercial

COMMERCIAL from A1

man Michael Filpi said. "Maybe something will spin off from this and they will come back here."

MacLean said the company planned to shoot footage in a waterfront area on the Hancock Road side of the lake, and at what used to be widely known as Muscle Beach on the North Street side, an area located between the dam on Hancock Road and the Ponterril boathouse off Route 7.

In one scene, plans call for a superimposed bottle of water to drop out of the sky to an actor sitting on the beach, MacLean said. The other scene would be shot under the premise that the beach in the town of "Perfect" would be located under a cloudless sky, unless the cloud was also perfect.

MacLean said the scene would be shot with an actor watching the sun set over the lake. A cloud would be added to the sky in post-production, MacLean said.

New beach to be built

In order to shoot the commercial spot, MacLean said the film company will build a sandy beach on a 30-foot-by-30-foot area of Muscle Beach, and in a 100-foot-by-120-foot area on the Hancock Road side. He said the company will remove the sand on the

Muscle Beach side, but leave the beach it creates on Hancock Road.

The beach on Hancock Road will be in an area located below a series of steps that lead from the second parking lot located on the north side of the road coming from the North Street intersection.

"What the city gets out of this is we're getting a beach engineered and constructed for us at no cost to the city," James McGrath, the city's director of community services, told the board.

Putting a beach in that area will also keep people from swimming in the boat channel nearest the dam, McGrath said.

"It's been a goal of the Parks Department since I've been on to recreate that beach there," McGrath added. "This is a way to get it done."

MacLean said the film crew would consist of 75 people, with 20 or 30 extras and actors participating in the beach scenes. The beach areas will be closed while filming takes place. He said the film company plans to find a location close to the lake where the actors and crew can park their cars.

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On the Web: www.BerkshireEagle.com

Pittsfield, Massachusetts, Thursday, July 24, 2003

Pittsfield beach to be location for 'Perfect Town' commercial

By Tony Dobrowolski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The Parks Commission has unanimously approved a Los Angeles film company's request to allow footage for a national TV commercial to be shot at Pontoosuc Lake.

Jeff MacLean, the film company's New England site coordinator, said the Walgreens Pharmacy chain was interested in having Pontoosuc Lake serve as the beach site for a 30-second spot in its fictional "Perfect Town" series of television commercials.

MacLean said his company planned to

shoot the footage at the lake on Monday, Aug. 4. In case of rain, filming would take place on Wednesday, Aug. 6, he said.

Other county sites

The company also plans to shoot commercial footage at several other county sites, including the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Skating Rink in North Adams, Ventfort Hall in Lenox and Wahconah Park.

"How did you find out about Pittsfield?" board member Jane Bresnahan asked MacLean.

MacLean said after a different film production company shot footage for a

Walgreens TV ad in Stockbridge and Lenox last year, his clients saw the "Perfect Town" as being in Berkshire County, specifically Pittsfield.

"They had a mission to do the commercial in the Berkshires from the get-go," he said. "The only other shot is in Cohasset."

Pontoosuc Lake was chosen as the site of the beach because, "it's a beautiful view with mountains," MacLean said.

"First and foremost this is great that this is coming to Pittsfield," board Chair-

COMMERCIAL, continued on A4



Ben Garver / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Ed Paquette, left, and Scott Dias paddle a canoe past Muscle Beach on Pontoosuc Lake in Pittsfield. The location will be used in a commercial shoot.

Drowning victim pulled from Onota

By Jack Dew
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Police pulled the body of an unidentified young man, the victim of an apparent drowning, from Onota Lake early yesterday morning.

At around 5:30, a pair of kayakers found the man floating face-down near a rope swing popular with teenagers, Pittsfield Police said yesterday. The Fire Department's dive team removed the body and police discovered a pair of jeans and a shirt along the bank believed to have belonged to the victim, but found no identification.

Late teens or 20s

According to police Detective Peter T. McGuire, the man is believed to have been in his late

teens or early 20s and had close-cropped, brown hair and a thin beard. Police suspect he drowned sometime on the Fourth of July, when Onota Lake was crowded with holiday visitors.

An autopsy yesterday concluded that the victim died by accidental drowning, but police would say little else about the case. They were asking for assistance from the public in identifying the man, who was 5 feet 11 inches tall and was wearing tan shorts when they pulled him from the water. On the shore, they found a pair of baggy Levi pants and a long-sleeved shirt, size extra large, with a yellow "Expres-so" logo on the front with two crossed flags and an eagle in the middle.

At Onota Lake yesterday, the DROWNING, continued on A4



Three Pittsfield Police officers pull into dock after retrieving the body of a drowning victim from Onota Lake yesterday.

Onota music fest bands must play inside pavilion

By Tony Dobrowski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Onota Lake will be the site of a music festival the first weekend in August, but it appears all of the entertainment will take place inside Controy Pavilion.

The five members of the Parks Commission voted unanimously Monday night to deny a request by festival organizer Rinaldo Del Gallo III to have a stage that will provide musical entertainment for children moved out of Controy Pavilion into a different location in Burbank Park.

Sound 'will stink'

Del Gallo said if both the children's stage and main entertainment stage remain inside the pavilion as currently planned, the musical acts will clash and the patrons' enjoyment will be limited. The music festival is scheduled to take place Aug. 2 and 3. "There's going to be a substantial sound difference," Del Gallo said. "You will hear the sound from the other stage and it will stink."

John Williams, who said he would be the engineer for the main stage during the festival, told the commission that having musicians performing inside the

pavilion on both stages simultaneously, "would be acoustically and logistically a nightmare."

Williams added that the pavilion only contains four electrical circuits and that the main stage would probably need to use them all.

He asked the board if the children's stage could be relocated at either the park's bathhouse or the boathouse.

The Park Commission on July 7 voted unanimously to approve the music festival, but with several conditions, including the stipulation that all the entertainment take place inside Controy Pavilion.

"One condition was that we keep everything inside Controy Pavilion," board member Jane Bresnahan said. "I don't even know why this is being raised."

The board also required Del Gallo to pay for two city police officers to provide security for the event and that he secure a certificate of insurance.

Saying he was unable to meet the latter two conditions, Del Gallo filed a lawsuit against the city of Pittsfield in Berkshire Superior Court, claiming city officials had violated his First Amendment rights.

DEL GALLO, continued on B4

Onota music festival bands must play inside pavilion

DEL GALLO from B1

Del Gallo is a spokesman for the Berkshire Fatherhood Coalition, an incorporated group that he said "broke away" from a larger organization some time ago. In previous appearances in front of the Park Commission, Del Gallo said the festival would also include "political speech" concerning shared parenting, an issue his organization is involved in.

One day before his lawsuit was to be heard in Superior Court, the city reached a settlement with Del Gallo that allowed the festival to take place.

Referring to notes from a previous board meeting Monday night, Chairman Michael Filpi said, "so far we've been anti-constitutional and anti-kids, now we're anti-having a good time."

"No matter what we do, Mr. Del Gallo, you keep coming back and just chipping away," Eleanor Persip said. She said if Del Gallo had organized the festival properly, "we would not have to go through this."

"I don't like the fact that you're changing things from month to month," John Marchesi shouted. "You agreed [to the condition]. Now you want to change your mind. This upsets me."

Rope swing at Onota Lake is taken down

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — A rope swing situated on Onota Lake near where the body of a drowning victim was found Saturday has been removed.

The swing, which officials have said was particularly popular with young people, was taken down soon after the body of 18-year-old Jesse M. Brazee of Pittsfield was found in the lake.

James McGrath, the city's director of community services, said yesterday that the swing was removed because it was unsafe. The drowning drew official attention to the swing, which was neither installed nor sanctioned by the city, said McGrath.

"The history of rope swings, as I understand it, is that as quickly as they are

ROPE SWING, continued on B4

Man drowns in Onota Lake

DROWNING from A1

rope swing area, which is about 200 feet away from the boat launch, was deserted. A few boaters and jet-ski riders were on the water, while sunbathers and anglers lined the shore.

Sitting on a picnic bench early in the afternoon, Zach Sweener, 22, and Shawn Maxwell, 21, had not yet heard of the drowning, but when told that the body had been found near the rope swing, they were not surprised.

"It's pretty dangerous," Maxwell said. "The water is kind of shallow there, and there are rocks, and you have to be smart about what you are doing."

Nearby, Bob Martin, 52, a frequent visitor to the lake, said he has long worried that the rope

swing area would be the site of this kind of tragedy. He said teenagers take advantage of its seclusion to hold illicit parties where they drink and use drugs.

"It's not a good place to go," Martin said. "It's out of sight, out of mind over there, and there are always people partying there. I walk over there a lot, and you just see nothing but beer and whiskey bottles all over the place."

Pittsfield Police yesterday would not comment on whether the victim had been drinking Friday before the drowning.

Police asked anyone with information on the drowning to contact them at (413) 448-9700.

Jack Dew can be reached at jdew@berkshireeagle.com.

Rope swing at Onota Lake is taken down

ROPE SWING from B1

taken down, a new one is put up," said McGrath.

Police investigating Brazee's drowning have not suggested that it was connected with the swing. The circumstances of his death remained under investigation yesterday; he was last seen on Friday at 7 p.m. His body was found by two kayakers the next morning.

McGrath said yesterday that "some pretty good-size rocks" submerged in relatively shallow water extend eight or 10 feet from shore near the swing, increasing the risk of injury to those who may be unfamiliar with the area.

Any other rope swings found on city property will be removed, he said.

Eagles Band to play at Springside House

PITTSFIELD — The Eagles Band will present the second in its series of three free "Concerts In The Park" on Tuesday at 7 p.m. on the lawn of Springside House, 874 North St.

Music director Robert Salzman will lead the 50-piece community ensemble in a traditional wind band program of marches, light classics, and show music.

Concert-goers should bring lawn chairs and blankets for seating. In case of inclement weather, the concert will be held at the Berkshire Athenaeum.

ADOPT-A-PARK is a program that brings individuals and organizations together to help maintain the appearance of public parks. Volunteer tasks may include: trash pickup, reporting graffiti/vandalism/needed repairs, weeding, raking, cleaning picnic tables/benches, teaching a skill/craft to children, special planting and painting projects. The Retired & Senior Volunteer Program has adopted the Common Park facility on First Street and would welcome your help! If you're over 55 years of age or interested in volunteering at Common Park, please contact RSVP at 413-499-5917. All others, please contact the Parks & Recreation Department at 413-499-9343.

Eagles Band concert series opens Tuesday

PITTSFIELD — The Eagles Band will present the first in its series of three "Concerts in the Park" on Tuesday at 7 p.m. on the lawn of Springside House, 874 North St.

Guest conductors Deanna Fraher and Diane Nichols will present the 50-piece community ensemble in a traditional wind

band program of marches, light classics, swing, and show music.

Admission to the hour-long concert is free. Concert-goers are encouraged to bring lawn chairs and blankets for seating. In case of inclement weather, the concert will be held at the Berkshire Museum.

The Eagles Band was founded

in 1936 and is the official band of the city of Pittsfield. The concert series is sponsored by the Pittsfield Department of Parks and Recreation, the Public Arts Resource Center, and American Speedy Printing.

The other concerts in the series will be held July 15 at Springside Park and Aug. 5 at the Controy Pavilion, Onota Lake.

Music fest draws meager audience

By Jack Dew
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — After several weeks of controversy that peaked with a lawsuit against the city, yesterday's start of a two-day music festival and event espousing a revision of child custody laws drew a meager crowd.

Under low, gray skies and draped in a wet wool blanket of humidity, a few dozen celebrants gathered yesterday on the shores of Onoto Lake in Burbank Park, lured by the more than 30 acts scheduled to perform over two days.

The Berkshire Music Festival on the Lake was billed by its creator, Rinaldo Del Gallo III, as both a "Kids' Woodstock" and a "celebration of shared parenting." He organized the event on a shoestring budget, wooing musicians, clowns and puppeteers to perform for free.

Yesterday afternoon, Jodi LaPlante was dancing on a blanket with her 2-year-old daughter, Zenani, who was laughing and twirling to the music. LaPlante said she had been attracted by both the free entertainment and the politics.

"I was mostly looking for something to do in Berkshire County with the kids, and this is wonderful," she said. "And I also wanted to support the cause — I think it's a really good cause and important to support it. ... Sometimes, I think that things that are free don't get a large response, but this is a wonderful event."

Del Gallo organized the concert through his Berkshire Fatherhood Coalition, an unincorporated group that is dedicated to changing the state's child custody laws, rewriting them so that judges would have to grant both parents equal time with their children following a divorce, unless either the mother or

'Sometimes, I think that things that are free don't get a large response, but this is a wonderful event.'

father were shown to be unfit.

While Del Gallo had said before the event that he would speak on shared parenting for several minutes before each act on the adult stage, he downplayed the politics yesterday. He said in an interview that he was somewhat disappointed with the low turnout.

Weather blamed for turnout

"I wish it was more. I think the weather in the morning definitely hurt the crowd, but we've had a few hundred here, and a lot of kids came to see [jazz singer] Vikki True, and the marionette show has been a big hit," he said. "Hopefully, the weather [today] will improve and we will get a little bit better of a crowd."

In the weeks leading up to the concert, Del Gallo became a frequent petitioner of the City Council and the Parks Commission. He won free use of Pittsfield's mobile stage and of the Controy Pavilion in Burbank Park.

When Pittsfield asked him to hire police officers and secure an insurance policy to protect the city from liability, Del Gallo filed a lawsuit, claiming the city was trying to infringe on his rights of



Photo by Mark Baer

Jodi LaPlante dances with her 2-year-old daughter, Zenani, yesterday at the Berkshire Music Festival at Burbank Park in Pittsfield.

MUSIC, continued on B4



A day at the beach

Lifeguard Alexa Martin keeps an eye on people cavorting at the Burbank Park beach at Onoto Lake yesterday.

Del Librizzi / Berkshire Eagle Staff

7/16/03

Springside Park advocates oppose plan for athletic fields

Advocates of Springside Park oppose a plan at the North Street site for two athletic fields.

Representatives of the Friends of Springside Park addressed a parks commissioner meeting Monday to speak against a plan that parks department officials had proposed to construct two playing fields in a meadow area in the center of the park.

"We're a pretty loose group," Bill Carrigan said. "But when the park is threatened we unite unbelievably."

The city's need for these athletic fields, said parks director Jim McGrath, stems from a rising interest in soccer and lacrosse.

"We are not against playing fields at all," Royal Hartigan said. "But this [plan] would destroy the nature of the park... This is a very, very, unique place."

The group's resident naturalist Victor Capelli said that putting fields in the park would destroy the natural

element of the park.

"Anybody who is into the natural world as I am would have to echo Royal's comments," he said. Capelli said the natural elements of the park include wetlands, more than 50 species of trees, more than 125 species of wild flower and "relic tree and plant communities."

"This would be setting a precedent for development of the park," he said.

Judy Gitelson said "it would be a negative change." The retired educator said that schools use the natural environment of the park and its facilities for educational purposes.

Hartigan and others raised concerns that the distance from major roads to the proposed fields presents a maintenance problem. Being so isolated, off-road vehicles could come in at night and destroy the fields and the rest of the park. Also, in case of an emergency, the interior location could be difficult to reach by ambulance or fire truck.

"There are very few people around," Carrigan said. "There's always maintenance," he added. "And Pittsfield has a very poor record of maintenance, especially the parks department."

"It would be better to put them somewhere else with the necessary infrastructure," Hartigan said. He suggested using land on public school property where there are already parking lots and roadways. Other suggestions included two existing parks—Coolidge park and Rook park, located behind Herberg Middle School.

As a neighbor of the park, Elizabeth Kulass said that she would like to see a better plan from city officials—including a vision, an assessment and more public input.

"I would like a vision developed for the best possible use of this park in enhancing the lives of those who live in Pittsfield," she said.

Echoing Capelli's remarks, she said

that the park serves as a "nature preserve by default."

McGrath stressed to the park advocates that the Springside proposal is part of a preliminary plan to find two new fields.

"We need a minimum of two new fields in Pittsfield," he said. "Preferably two fields side by side."

However, he said the parks department is open to considering two fields that aren't adjacent to each other and he will look "across the gamut of city properties."

The department was developing a number of criteria and a range of options for the land where two fields could be placed, he said. "It will be well thought out, it will be well designed," he said.

Furthermore, he said the parks department will look at other prop-

erties suggested at the meeting and nothing was "set in stone."

"There will be further opportunity for public input," he said.

"I will not help to disserve the area of Springside park," said commissioner John Marchesi. He said that the Friends of Springside were "in the right ball track" voicing concerns, saying that a similar groundswell of opposition at one time prevented a new high school—Taconic—from being built on the park land. Also, he said past grassroots opposition prevented a public golf course from being built on the Springside land.

"There are other possibilities out there," commissioner Gene Nadeau said. Eleanor Persip said that the board would "take a really good strong look" at the suggestions and complaints raised.

44 — The Berkshire Eagle, Sunday, August 3, 2003



Photo by Mark Baer

Leah Leblanc, left, and Shannon Griffin, both 5, play yesterday in a puddle left from Friday's heavy rain at the Berkshire Music Festival on the Lake at Burbank Park in Pittsfield.

Music festival draws meager audience

MUSIC from B1

free speech. The suit was settled, with the city waiving its request for insurance and agreeing to provide security at a reduced rate.

Yesterday, Councilor at large Peter G. Arlos visited the concert site in the early afternoon and called it a disappointment. He said the press and city officials had blown the scale of the event out of proportion, wrongly predicting a large turnout, which sparked the demands of insurance and security and in turn triggered the lawsuit.

"They fed it, as if there was going to be a massive crowd that would have to be controlled," Arlos said. "Common sense should have told them when [Del Gallo] appeared before those boards that he had no support. He never had a group of people with him."

Arlos said many were turned off by the political message: "People



Mark Baer

Rinaldo Del Gallo III

know what shared parenting means — it means you don't pay child support, and that's a damaging, scheming thing that people don't like."

But few people yesterday

seemed concerned about the politics.

Thanks to the steady rainfall Friday, the grass field in front of the stage had been turned into a swamp, and children splashed, ran and dove in a giant puddle while Del Gallo tried to pump the water into the lake.

'Here for the fun'

A father who identified himself only as Mark brought his son and nephew for the day. While they swam in the nearby lake, he sat in a lawn chair and enjoyed the music.

"I'm here just for the fun of it," he said. "I read about it in the paper and it seemed like something good to do."

The concert continues today, with entertainment scheduled from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Jack Dew can be reached at jdew@berkshireeagle.com.

Safety last for Eagle, Parks board

To the Editor of THE EAGLE:

As a member of the Berkshire Fatherhood Coalition, and a singer/songwriter who will be playing in the Berkshire Music Festival on the Lake this upcoming weekend, I was repulsed by your July 25 editorial, "First Amendment Takes a Beating." Perhaps, least offensive is the continual calling of attorney Rinaldo Del Gallo's lawsuit a "nuisance lawsuit," despite being provided with case after case that holds that indigent speakers cannot be priced out of the First Amendment marketplace by the imposition of unfair requirements for police patrols and insurance. But this reckless disregard of the truth is far surpassed by The Eagle's (and the Park Commission's for that matter) reckless disregard of the safety of the children.

As many know, our music festival will feature a stellar children's performance series known as "The Kids Woodstock." Obviously, this will attract many children of tender years, all of whom will want to take a dip in the water. The primary reason the Berkshire Fatherhood Coalition wanted to have the Kids Woodstock by the bathhouse is that if children go swimming, they will be protected by a lifeguard.

I believe it obvious to the general public that where there is a draw for children, the safety of children is paramount. Neither in

its article about the Park Commission meeting or the follow-up editorial did The Eagle ever once mention the issue of safety. The No. 1 accidental cause of death of children is drowning.

As any police officer would tell you, crowd control is much easier done when people are dispersed over a larger area, instead of concentrating them in one central location. That's why we limit the number of people in buildings, stadiums, and other public gathering spots.

It is a great irony that many in Pittsfield think the event is to take place *inside* the Controy Pavilion building, an incorrect understanding caused by one of The Eagle's articles, when the event will take place *on the lawns* of the Controy Pavilion. How many people will not come because of this misunderstanding? The mistake was an understandable error, given the unfortunate use of the expression "inside the Controy Pavilion" by both Del Gallo and the Parks Commission.

Al Pier, caretaker of the Controy Pavilion, has saved the day by allowing the Kids Woodstock tent to be placed by his house. Hopefully, this will improve the sound and the artistic integrity of the performers. This benefits both the artist and the audience enjoying their performance.

THOM PEASE
Pittsfield, July 27, 2003

'Perfect' day at Pontoosuc



Elise Passamano catches a cold bottle of water that drops from the sky at Pontoosuc Lake during yesterday's shooting of a Walgreens 'Perfect Day at the Beach' commercial.

'Idyllic' Pittsfield beach is setting for commercial

By Tony Dobrowolski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — It was cloudy, wet and muggy at Pontoosuc Lake yesterday — not exactly perfect beach weather.

However, the elements did not deter a film crew from spending the entire day at the lake yesterday shooting footage for a 30-second national television commercial.

The Walgreens Pharmacy chain chose Pontoosuc Lake to be the site of "the perfect beach" in its series of a "Town Called Perfect" commercials. The perfect beach spot is one of seven new commercials Walgreens is shooting.

Most of the shooting for the new ads will take

place at sites in Berkshire County. The crew will be shooting scenes for other commercials at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Skating Rink in North Adams today, at Ventfort Hall in Lenox tomorrow and at IS183, Art School of the Berkshires, in Stockbridge on Thursday, producer Michael Rafayko said.

Bonnie Gordon, Walgreens manager of creative broadcasting, said three of the new commercials depict perfect holidays, while the other spots are intended to depict the perfect beach, baseball game, school and birthday party.

One of the holiday commercials, which depicts Halloween, will air in mid-October,

PERFECT, continued on A2



The cast and crew for a Walgreens commercial converge on shores of Pontoosuc Lake yesterday.

Pittsfield beach is setting for commercial

PERFECT from A1

while the other two will be televised beginning in mid-November. The film crew has already shot some of the holiday commercial footage in the Boston area, Gordon said.

The other commercials, including the perfect beach, won't air until mid-January, she said.

Walgreens shot commercial footage in Berkshire County for a different series of ads in Lenox and Stockbridge last year. The company liked the area so much it decided to return this year.

"We're trying to create a place called 'Perfect,'" Gordon said. "It's not a perfect time or place. It's just somewhere serene and beautiful, like this area if you came to a particular place."

Gordon said Pontoosuc Lake was chosen to be the site of "the perfect beach" because it's "such an idyllic setting," Gordon said.

Morning rain

It rained at the lake yesterday morning, but Rafayko said the film crew, which consisted of 80 members, never thought about not filming.

"The crew's here. We have everything booked," Rafayko said. "You get what you get."

There were a few concessions to the weather. Filming was originally scheduled to take place at two sites around the lake — a 30-foot-by-20-foot area just south of the

Ponterril Boathouse and at a 100-by-200-foot site located off Hancock Road. But Rafayko said it was decided to limit shooting to just the Hancock Road site, because Sunday's bad weather delayed the start of yesterday's shooting.

"To make the company move now would take about an hour and a half," Rafayko said around mid-afternoon yesterday.

Rafayko said crew members had built a sandy beach for shooting on the Hancock Road site. The crew put down the sand Sunday and covered it, but heavy rains washed most of it into the lake. Sand will be added into the commercial during post-production, Rafayko said.

When the Park Commission allowed the film crew to shoot footage at the lake last month, James McGrath, the city's director of community services, said plans called for the sand to be left at the Hancock Road site for use as a sandy beach.

But Rafayko said yesterday the company planned to remove the sand after it was done filming. During negotiations to use the lake, city officials said they wanted the film company to leave the sand, but then decided against it, according to Rafayko.

Gordon said the perfect beach commercial will begin with an aerial shot of umbrellas. Viewers

will then see umbrellas turn and bring the water bottles from out of the sky down to the land. One water bottle will drop into the hand of a young woman sitting in a chair. The commercial will close with a "perfect cloud" blocking the sun. The cloud and blue sky will be added in post-production, Gordon said.

The commercial has eight actors. Six of them were selected from Berkshire County theater groups, such as the Berkshire and Williamstown theater festivals. One actor, Aaron Norris of New York City, participated in the recent production of "Damn Yankees" at Wahconah Park.

Elise Passamano, 19, who plays the woman who plucks the water bottle out of the air, is an apprentice at the Williamstown Theatre Festival.

The other two actors, 16-year-old Matt Rush of Lenox and 21-year-old Kevin Ahern of Pittsfield, were selected by the commercial's casting director, who went to different county sites looking for extras. Rush, who is a lifeguard at the Lenox Town Beach, said people involved in the commercial came to the beach and took his picture, then told him later that he had been selected.

"I was the lucky one who got called," Rush said. He said his acting skills were limited to a play in which he acted in seventh grade. "That's about it," he said.

Historic status closer for Wahconah Park

By Jack Dew
Berkshire Eagle Staff

8/5/03

PITTSFIELD — Wahconah Park has cleared a key hurdle on the course toward inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, where it could be eligible for state grants to help maintain the ballpark.

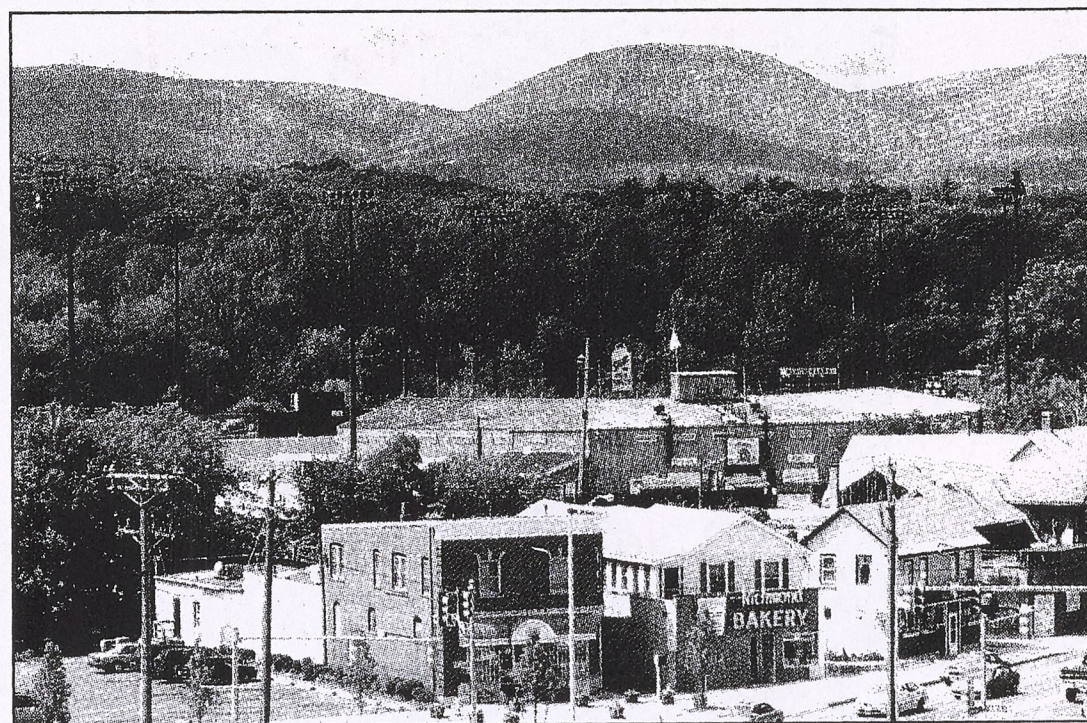
The Massachusetts Historical Commission last week declared Wahconah Park eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, an announcement that will let Pittsfield move forward in the lengthy nomination process that has been under way for more than a year.

The ballpark has been home to baseball games since 1892, according to some local historians, and its grandstand has undergone little alteration since it was built in the 1950s.

The City Council and Mayor Sara Hathaway had both pushed for its inclusion on the national list. If it makes it through the nomination process, it could qualify for up to \$100,000 from a pool of \$5 million to \$6 million in special grants given out each year to help maintain historic locations in the state.

Ward 7 City Councilor Joseph O. Guzzo has been the leading voice in the effort to have Wahconah included on the national list. He issued an announcement that the Massachusetts Historical Commission has found the park eligible for listing, which means it must now go through the nomination process to the state and then, if approved at that level, would be forwarded to the National Park Service in

PARK, continued on B4



Ben Garver / Berkshire Eagle

Wahconah Park in Pittsfield is a candidate for the National Register of Historic Places.

Drowning at Onota Lake determined to be accidental

By Tony Dobrowolski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Following a three-week police investigation, the Berkshire County District Attorney's office has determined that the drowning death of an 18-year-old Pittsfield man on July 4 was accidental.

Jesse M. Brazee of Pittsfield drowned in Onota Lake on Independence Day. He was last seen at about 7 p.m. that day, according to police. Brazee's body was found in the lake by two kayakers early on the morning of July 5.

"Although final toxicological testing remains to be completed, we are confident at this juncture that this tragic death was accidental and not the product of any foul play," District Attorney Gerard D. Downing said in a written statement.

"Preliminary testing and other evidence does, however, support the finding that alcohol and drugs played a role in the activities that day," Downing said.

Other than the written statement, the district attorney's office declined to release any further information, including how Brazee drowned.

In his statement, Downing said that the findings were based on an extensive investigation conducted by Pittsfield Police that was headed by Capt. Patrick F. Barry and Detectives Peter T. McGuire and Michael Maddalena.

"Dozens of people were interviewed, physical evidence was gathered and examined, and medical information was analyzed," Downing said.

At the request of the district attorney's office, information and the autopsy results were reviewed by Associate State Medical Examiner Lorne Mednick. An autopsy conducted July 5 had determined that Brazee had died by accidental drowning.

"Dr. Mednick's review also confirmed this was an accidental drowning,"

Downing said. "Because this occurred at a popular recreation area, on a hot, busy holiday, it was quite challenging to identify and locate all potential witnesses or sources of information."

'Rumors and misinformation'

"Also, unfortunately, rumors and misinformation were spread, causing investigators to track down and dismiss the false stories," Downing said.

The district attorney's office declined to elaborate on what rumors and misinformation it was referring to.

In the statement, both Barry and the district attorney's office expressed gratitude to what they termed the high level of citizen cooperation.

"Virtually all who were at the rope swing area that day, swimmers, boaters and others, have been helpful in coming forward and responding to police," Downing said.

The Pittsfield Fire Department's rescue/dive team, the medical staff at Berkshire Medical Center and the state medical examiner's office were also cited for their cooperation.

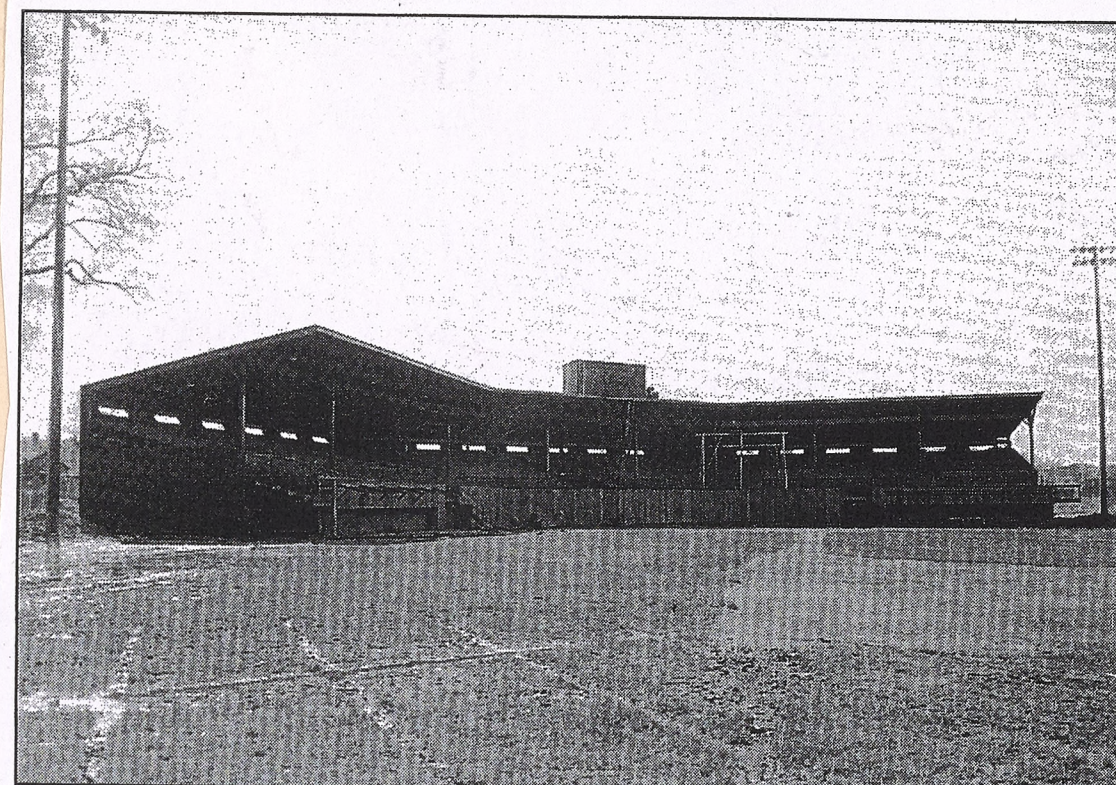
Brazee attended Pittsfield schools, most recently Taconic High School. Family members said his interests included swimming, basketball, football and BMX bicycle riding.

"We again express our sympathy to the Brazee family and thank them for their remarkable patience and understanding over the past several weeks," Downing said.

7/25/03

Monday, August 5, 2003

The Berkshires



Eagle File Photo

Wahconah Park's grandstand has not undergone significant alterations since it was built in the 1950s, as pictured above.

Park closer to historic status

PARK from B1

Washington, D.C., for a final decision.

"[Wahconah Park] has an enormous amount of history, and I think it is real important that we recognize that and give it the recognition it deserves," Guzzo said. "We have let some things go here in the city in the past, and I think that we could serve ourselves well to embrace something with the magnitude of Wahconah Park and its history with minor league baseball."

The Massachusetts Historical Commission wrote to Pittsfield on July 31 to report that the park is eligible. Its preservation planner, Philip Bergen, cited as a key asset Wahconah's continued use as a home to minor league baseball with few changes to the field or grandstand.

"This extended and continued use of the park as a baseball field has retained much that is original, and in a period where minor league fields have been replaced, extensively remodeled, or fallen into disuse, Wahconah Park is a survivor," Bergen wrote.

If Wahconah is added to the historic register, it would join a number of other Pittsfield locations to be so honored, including Arrowhead, which was once the home of Herman Melville; the Park Square Historic District, which includes more than 40 properties, and a number of



Ben Garver / Berkshire Eagle Staff

A crew from the Black Bears organization repairs rain damage at the park yesterday.

churches.

Hathaway said yesterday that she was gratified by the state's response. "It's a way of honoring our baseball tradition and perhaps appreciating in a new way the qualities of a historic ballpark," she said.

Pittsfield must now prepare a National Register nomination, a lengthy process in which the city may choose to hire a consultant. Hathaway said she has discussed the next step with Guzzo, and proposed seeking volunteers or searching out someone who could

do the work for free.

"Obviously, price makes a difference," Hathaway said. "We don't want to cut corners on the submission, but if we can get it done without a fancy, slick package, it seems like we still accomplish our mission."

Guzzo said he thought some combination of hired and volunteer help will be used to ready the nomination, which he hopes will be done by January.

Jack Dew can be reached at jdew@berkshireeagle.com

Pittsfield officials square off for budget fight

By Jack Dew
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — In anticipation of the cuts coming in state aid next fiscal year, Mayor Sara Hathaway is telling officials in her administration to plan for major budget reductions, and the City Council is planning to convene a series of special meetings to plot its own cuts from Pittsfield's \$100 million budget.

Though both sides deny it, the debate is already taking shape as a perpetuation of the long-running feud between mayor and council, highlighted by the council's decision to take the unprecedented step of convening meetings to put together its own budget plan, going against decades of tradition spelled out by state law granting the mayor the sole power to propose a budget and the City Council the authority to cut from — but not add to — that proposal.

Though each side is laying claim to the mantle of fiscal prudence, the convoluted politics of the budget battle were on display at last Tuesday's council meeting.

Though each side is laying claim to the mantle of fiscal prudence, the convoluted politics of the budget battle were on display at last Tuesday's council meeting. Even as the councilors voiced grave concerns over the possibility of a \$2 million cut from the state this fiscal year and a \$6 million to \$8 million cut the next, they approved a revision to the city code that would give Fire Chief Raymond E. Risley a

\$10,000-a-year raise, bumping his pay to \$73,830.

Hathaway, while she opposes Risley's raise and has threatened to veto it, is herself pushing to fill a vacant position in the Parks Department that pays \$41,000 a year. That stance has incurred the ire of the council, which argues the job's duties have already been absorbed by other employees and

gives the city a painless way to cut the budget.

Asked whether the coming process to plot the spending plan for fiscal 2004, which begins July 1, will be just another round in her fight with the council, Hathaway said it would not.

"I believe there are places where the public sector has to invest in order to attract private

investment and new residents," Hathaway said. "To bring Pittsfield to where we want it to be, there is going to have to be strategic investment using public resources. At the same time, this city has not seen a fresh examination of its costs in a long time, and I think fiscal 2004 is the year to do that. There are a number of places where we can create savings that will help us free up resources to make those strategic investments."

While Hathaway has already

BUDGET, continued on B4

Pittsfield officials square off for fight over budget cuts

BUDGET from B1

given orders to municipal department heads to examine their spending and find places to cut, she said she will rely particularly on members of her administration who have private-sector experience like Community Development Director Mark Amuso, who was Berkshire Medical Center's director of material management, and Director of Maintenance Ernest J. Fortini, a former General Dynamics employee.

"I want to examine the structure of our budget and not just look at individual departments and individual line items. I want to ... find ways to consolidate or examine services that we've assumed were essential, our core functions, and take a fresh look and see whether there is a way to reduce cost," Hathaway said.

City Council President Richard A. Scapin plans to call a special council meeting this month followed by two or three in February and a few in March to begin combing through the budget and picking places to reduce spending. The recommendations will then be forwarded to the mayor for her consideration when putting together her proposal.

"I feel this council is qualified enough to determine what we would like to see as cuts from the budget. We are not here to micro-manage," Scapin said. "We are not trying to buck the system. Instead of having a budget thrown at us and then try to make the cuts, we are going to have a process where we are going to have a list that we will present to Mayor Hathaway and say, 'This is what the City Council would like to see.' Hopefully this will help her and the department heads."

Scapin and his colleagues have frequently been at odds with Hathaway and have said repeatedly that she fails to consult the council before proposing major programs. The council's special hearings will ensure it is heard early in the budget process, even if the mayor chooses not to heed its advice.

Still, Scapin tried to portray the

hearings in a less-aggressive light and said they should be seen as evidence of the council's good will: "We are willing to make cuts and we are willing to work with the mayor. I think in general this is a team effort."

Though its budget is about \$100 million, the city has far less discretionary spending than it can trim. The state establishes the school system's budget, which this year is \$40 million. Blue Cross Blue Shield will determine the cost of Pittsfield's employee health insurance, which is \$13.3 million this year, and the city is required to make annual debt payments of about \$7 million, a number that may rise next year, and is not subject to negotiation.

With \$40 million left from which to cut, Pittsfield will struggle if forced to reduce spending by the projected \$6 million to \$8 million next year, and it seems likely that residents will lose some popular services. And if the state decides to slash school spending, the city may see one of its two high schools closed or massive teacher layoffs.

Hathaway said, "Municipal services are so essential and are quite a bargain. People care about having their streets plowed. They care about having garbage removed. They care about parks. They care about streets being paved, and I think we are doing a good job of delivering those services."

The timetable for the mayor's budget remains unclear. Hathaway said she will continue talking to the people in her administration to put the plan together, but the final proposal will depend heavily on how the numbers from the state shake out, which may not be known for several months.

Once Hathaway's budget is put together it will go to the City Council for a series of hearings, which are typically spaced over two or three weeks. If the city fails to implement the full budget by the start of fiscal 2004 on July 1, as happened in fiscal 2002, it can operate on a one-month spending plan.

Jack Dew can be reached at jdew@berkshireeagle.com.

Parks panel recommends spending plan

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The Parks Commission last night unanimously endorsed a draft plan for spending some \$550,000 on fields and other amenities in the city's public parks.

The plan, which earmarks funds from a pool of about \$850,000 that remains from a \$1 million gift given to Pittsfield in 2000 by city native Lawrence Bossidy, now proceeds to the City Council and Mayor Sara Hathaway.

Specifically, the plan calls for complete rehabilitation of two soccer fields and a basketball court at Kirvin Park, which also would receive a new playground structure.

Baseball field refurbished

In addition, the baseball field at Deming Park would be refurbished and new "playground pieces" installed there.

A third field at the Doyle Memorial Complex would be completed and the Babe Ruth field at the complex would be refurbished.

At Springside Park, two new fields would be built and restrooms installed. General improvements also are planned at Coolidge playground. The soccer field at Clapp Park is to be refurbished and a safety fence installed along the baselines of the baseball field. A new playground structure also is to be built at Clapp Park, and new playground pieces are to be installed at Marchisio Park.

The plan calls for \$100,000 to be set aside to cover contingencies associated with the projects. No precise cost estimates have been arrived at.

PARKS, continued on B4

Parks panel OKs spending plan

PARKS from B1

The Parks Commission recommends that another \$100,000 be placed in an account to be used for maintenance of projects funded by the Bossidy gift, and that \$200,000 be deposited in an investment account earmarked for future projects.

Youth facility

Also last night, plans for a youth sports facility on a former brownfield site off East Street were discussed.

The aim of the meeting was to solicit public opinion about the facility, which will be built with money provided by General Electric Co.

Groundbreaking is scheduled for this spring, said Thomas E. Hickey Jr., executive director of the Pittsfield Economic Development Authority. PEDAA will maintain the facility through 2006 to give the city time to develop a budget to meet the costs, said Hickey.

A projected budget of about \$600,000, funded by GE, will develop a 3.5-acre parcel near the intersection of East and Newell streets into a Little League base-

ball field and a youth soccer field, Hickey said.

Also envisioned is an underground sprinkler and drainage system for both fields, dugouts, a scorers' box, bleachers, lights for night games and restrooms. A quarter-mile walking track will surround the fields. The track will have a "rubberized" surface.

Plans call for access to the facility from Newell Street; parking for about 35 vehicles will be available, with additional parking nearby, Hickey said.

Under an agreement with GE, Pittsfield holds a 99-year lease on the land.

Replying to a question, Hickey said last night that PCBs were detected on a small portion of the property but that GE will remove them from the site by excavation. He said that when the project is completed, the concentration of PCBs on the entire site will be less than one part per million in the first 3 feet of soil, a level that is well within U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-sanctioned standards for public health and safety.

D.R. Bahlman can be reached at dbahlman@berkshireeagle.com.

Bossidy Bucks rescinded and reauthorized

A much-debated spending plan for \$550,000 of Bossidy Bucks was formally rescinded Tuesday — then reauthorized in a revised format.

At the request of Mayor Sara Hathaway, councilors first reversed their vote in favor of a plan to release monies for field upgrades and new playground equipment.

"If this order goes forward as written, any money not spent at the end of this fiscal year would go into the general fund," said Hathaway.

The revised order protects any unexpended money — donated by Bossidy for park improvements — from automatic reallocation to the city's general accounts.

"I believe it will accomplish the goal you intended," said Hathaway. "Protecting the Bossidy money is a responsibility both to the donor and the community."

At-large councilor Gerald Lee — consistent with prior votes — opposed the revised \$550,000 order.

Pittsfield Parks has UMass tickets

The Pittsfield Department of Parks and Recreation, in conjunction with the University of Massachusetts, is offering reduced-rate tickets for the UMass-UAlbany game on Sunday, Dec. 28. Tickets are \$8 for all city residents. The game begins at 2 p.m.

Tickets are available at the Parks Department office, 874 North St., weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. Payment by check is preferred, and should be made payable to the UMass Athletic Program. Information: Parks Department, 499-9343.

Tuesday, January 14, 2003

City of Pittsfield

1/15/03
City of Pittsfield Department of Community Services seeks and experienced individual for the position of Recreation Director to be responsible for the planning, organization, promotion and direction of city-wide recreational programs and activities for all age groups, both indoors and outdoors. Must have excellent customer service skills and strong ability to work well with people; ability to communicate clearly and concisely, orally and in writing; ability to supervise, subordinate personnel effectively and to delegate tasks efficiently; ability to develop and maintain harmonious relationships with city and school officials, community organizations, and the general public; experience in developing recreational activities and programs; working knowledge of budgeting, finance, and marketing; and willingness to work a flexible schedule, which may include evenings and weekends. Requirement include high school diploma and 1-3 years experience in developing and/or managing recreational activities or programs, with preference given for a college degree in recreation or related field. Send resume and cover letter to Personnel Department, City Hall, 70 Allen St. Room 107, Pittsfield, MA 01201 by 4 p.m. on Monday, January 6, 2003. Salary \$30,355-\$40,265. AA/EOE/ADA/F/V.

Nilan leaves parks board

By Bill Carey
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Longtime Parks Commission member Clifford J. Nilan has tendered his resignation, clearing the way for Mayor Sara Hathaway's last, stalled appointment to the board.

City councilors yesterday said they would move quickly to approve Hathaway's nominee, former Parks Department recreation director John C. Marchesi. The council meets tonight.

The Marchesi nomination has been tabled since September, when the council approved four of Hathaway's five nominees but balked at replacing Nilan, a 26-year veteran of the parks board.

The approved nominees are Michael

Filpi, now chairman of the commission, Eugene Nadeau, Jane Bresnahan and Eleanor Persip.

Nilan tendered his resignation in a brief letter to the mayor dated Friday, saying he was "grateful and honored by the opportunity afforded me" to serve on the board. He could not be reached yesterday for comment.

Ward 1 Councilor Robert G. Tuttle, who has tried unsuccessfully to take the Marchesi nomination off the table, said he has "every intention" of calling for a new vote now that Nilan has resigned.

Tuttle said he had commitments of support for the Marchesi nomination from two other councilors — enough for a majority — if Nilan had remained on the board past this month.

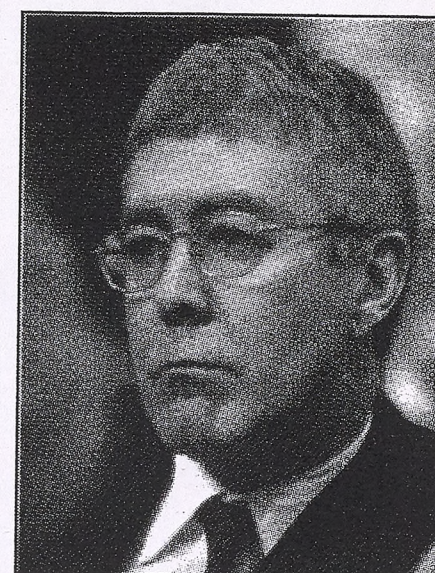
"I don't know why they did it," he said of the councilors who opposed Marchesi's appointment. "You can't continue to insult people who volunteer for the city."

Councilor at large Peter G. Arlos, who endeavored to delay the appointment, said he now will vote for Marchesi. Arlos had argued that "institutional memory" was needed on a board that Hathaway had moved to replace.

"I have no objection to Marchesi. Sure, I'll support him," he said yesterday.

Nevertheless, Arlos criticized Hathaway's handling of the matter.

"Cliff Nilan gave 26 years of volunteer service to the Parks Commission, and he was shabbily treated by the mayor," he



Eagle File

Clifford J. Nilan

NILAN, continued on B4

City officials mull terms of park deal

COUNCIL from B1

paid no rent, but did pay for the electric heat and other utilities serving the house. He also was responsible for various maintenance tasks.

The new lease will contain similar terms, said Mitchell.

"There's a lot of things he's required to do; the [lease] specifies what the caretaking services will include," Mitchell said. He said that lawn mowing, weed trimming, picking up bird and animal droppings, shoveling, raking and other minor maintenance jobs will be included.

Tuttle told the council that he is opposed to having anyone live in city-owned residential property.

Among other actions taken by the City Council at its Tuesday night meeting:

• The long-debated vicious dog ordinance was approved unanimously. The ordinance requires owners of dogs deemed to be vicious to have their animals identified with a tattoo or a micro-chip under the skin and to buy liability insurance.

• The council asked Thomas Hickey, executive director of the Pittsfield Economic Development Authority, to prepare and deliver a report to the Community and Economic Development Committee on any progress being made to redevelop the GE properties being demolished.

• A proposal by City Councilor Daniel Bianchi that the School Department consider budget-saving measures was approved unanimously. It will be considered at the upcoming joint meeting of the City Council and the School Committee. That meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 13, at 7 p.m. in the auditorium of the Berkshire Athenaeum.

• The council approved unanimously a petition by Councilor Peter Arlos directing that all department heads, boards and commissions submit proposals detailing how 10 percent and 20 percent could be cut from their budgets.

D.R. Bahlman can be reached at dbahlman@berkshireeagle.com.

Nilan leaves parks board

NILAN from B1

said. "She showed absolutely no sense of gratitude."

City Council President Richard A. Scapin, who sided with Arlos on the tabled nomination, said he also will vote for Marchesi. "Now that Cliff's [resigned], I'll support John Marchesi's appointment," he said.

Nilan "has been dedicated to the parks and done a great job," Scapin added. "The Parks Commission is on track. His knowledge, his background, his years of

dedication to the Parks Commission said a lot."

Hathaway said she received Nilan's resignation letter yesterday in the mail and had not spoken to him beforehand. She said the resignation did not come entirely as a surprise, as she was aware that people were discussing such a move with Nilan.

"I'm certainly grateful both for his long service and that he's willing to step down at this time and clear the decks for my appointment," she said. "I think this is the best possible outcome."

'There's a lot of things he's required to do; the [lease] specifies what the caretaking services will include.'

City officials considering deal to let caretaker stay in park

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — An agreement concerning a caretaker's occupancy of a house at Burbank Park is under review by city officials.

The matter was the subject of a petition brought before the City Council on Jan. 27 by Councilor Robert G. Tuttle of Ward 1. The petition sought an explanation of "why someone is living rent-free in a city-owned house across from the Controy Pavilion at Burbank Park."

The council voted to refer the matter to the city's conservation agent, Caleb Mitchell, because the property on which the house is situated is under the control of the Conservation Commission.

In a telephone interview Thursday, Mitchell said that a caretaker, Alan R. Pires, has been living in the house on Lakeway Drive at least since 1991 and that a lease with him expired some years ago.

Mitchell said he does not know what the financial terms of a new lease will be. Under the previous lease, the caretaker

COUNCIL, continued on B4

Big picture on parks

The Pittsfield Parks Commission is in danger of frittering away a \$1 million bequest to the city by spending it on laundry list of routine repair and maintenance projects rather than measuring park improvements against a comprehensive long-term plan. The \$1 million gift from business mogul and Pittsfield native Larry Bossidy should be applied to projects that will make a significant impact upon the city's recreational resources, especially since the city so ignominiously rejected his offer to help build a new ballpark and purchase a minor league team. Certainly a few of these projects are worthy, but a grander vision is needed.

Winter drawdown set for Onota Lake

PITTSFIELD — The winter drawdown of Onota Lake is scheduled to begin on Wednesday, Oct. 15.

According to the city's Order of Conditions from the Conservation Commission, the lake will be drawn down approximately three feet (plus or minus a half-foot) below the spillway level by Nov. 15.

It is anticipated that this elevation will be reached by mid to late November, weather permitting. The lake will remain at this elevation through winter, with refill beginning around March 15, 2004.

Any questions regarding the drawdown should call the Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation, at 499-9343.

The Berkshire Eagle, Thursday, January 23, 2003 — B7

Lease being updated for Springside House, Park Commission told

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — An "update" of the lease under which the city rents a portion of Springside House to a tenant is under way, the Parks Commission was told Tuesday night.

The issue arose after City Councilor Robert G. Tuttle of Ward 1, which encompasses Springside Park, appeared at the commission's meeting to request a copy of the lease with Thomas M. Guinan. Guinan has lived in Springside House at 874 North St. since 1994 and acts as caretaker for the property.

John C. Marchesi, who was attending his first meeting of the commission since his appointment to it was endorsed by the City Council on Jan. 14, said that the lease provides that Guinan pay the city \$300 per month rent. Utilities are paid by the city, said Marchesi, who is a former director of recreation for the Parks Department.

Guinan, who was not present at the meeting (which was held in Springside House) is the author of a letter to the editor of The Eagle in which he criticized Marchesi's job performance during his tenure as recreation director. In the letter, published Dec. 19, 2002, Guinan also argued against Marchesi's appointment to the Parks Commission.

Tuttle, who was told that a copy of the lease would be provided to him, said he does not believe that anyone should be living in Springside House or any other building on park property.

The city councilor also said he has been told that Guinan at one point sublet his quarters in Springside House for \$500 per month.

"Mr. Tuttle has been misinformed," Guinan said in a telephone interview Tuesday night. "That's all I want to say about this."

Tuttle also questioned the rationale for stationing a caretaker at the park and charged that the city is not getting full value in the deal.

"I think we're getting scammed," he said.

Tuttle also suggested that the

city could incur additional liability by having a tenant in the building.

Since the beginning of Guinan's tenancy, vandalism of Springside House has declined "90 percent," said Parks Commission Chairman Michael Filpi, who added that he had been given that information by Parks Department staff.

James McGrath, the city's director of community services, noted that some \$1 million worth of equipment is stored at Springside Park and the presence of a caretaker on the property helps deter theft and vandalism.

McGrath said he has initiated a review of the lease by the city solicitor's office with an eye toward updating it. The commission took no formal action on the matter Tuesday night.

Later in the meeting, as the commission discussed the progress of its review of park rules and regulations, Marchesi said that he will consult with McGrath about the rules and "reword some of these" prior to the commission's next meeting.

Marchesi, who served with the Parks Department for more than 30 years prior to his retirement in September, also declared that his knowledge and expertise had not been adequately drawn upon since his retirement in September 2002.

"Nobody ever contacted me," he said. "... I could have given you some ideas about things you were doing that you shouldn't and some things you weren't doing that you should."

McGrath noted that his first day on the job coincided almost exactly with Marchesi's retirement. He said that he looks forward to working with Marchesi as a member of the Parks Commission.

"You play ball with me and I'll play ball with you," Marchesi replied.

About 10 minutes later, as the meeting neared its conclusion, Marchesi praised McGrath's job performance and declared that he faces a difficult challenge given the city's financial situation.

Parks board eyes Bossidy projects

A plan to spend the remainder of the Bossidy Bucks has emerged.

Despite disagreements, parks commissioners on Monday gave preliminary approval to a draft proposal to allocate the approximately \$850,000 remaining of a \$1 million gift from Larry Bossidy.

"These are only estimated costs," stressed community services director James McGrath. "I think we did a pretty good job addressing the needs of the community that were raised at [a December] input meeting."

McGrath's plan calls for setting aside \$250,000 for investment and possible future projects.

Expenditures, which would likely take two to three years, would include:

- Redoing soccer fields at Kirvin Park (\$50,000)
- Redoing the Kirvin basketball court (\$10,000)
- Installing a playground structure at Kirvin (\$65,000)
- Redoing the Deming Park baseball field (\$45,000)
- Installing playground pieces at Deming (\$15,000)
- Completing a third girls softball field at the Doyle complex (\$30,000)
- Redoing the Babe Ruth baseball field at the Doyle site (\$45,000)
- Constructing two new fields at Springside Park (\$30,000)
- A contribution toward a Springside "boundless playground" (\$50,000)
- A contribution toward a North Little League concession stand (\$20,000)
- New playground pieces for Coolidge Park (\$20,000)
- Redoing soccer and softball fields at Clapp Park (\$25,000)
- Installing a new playground structure at Clapp (\$65,000)
- Installing new playground pieces at Marchisio Park (\$30,000)

The preliminary plan also allocates \$100,000 for contingency expenses, which could be transferred to the investment/capital account if not utilized.

McGrath envisions using the investment/capital account as leverage for possible future major projects.

"It just gives us the opportunity to seek a project," he said. "We'll sit on that and if something comes along that feels right, we'll be able to jump on it."

With some reservations, commissioners tentatively adopted the plan on

2/27/03 See BOSSIDY page 9

Help sought to install playground equipment

Ward 1 city councilor Rob Tuttle is looking for volunteers to help install playground equipment at West Memorial Park.

Tuttle obtained used equipment for the park with the help of parks director Jim McGrath and foreman Tony Stracuzzi. The equipment includes a swing set and new slide. Tuttle hopes to involve the neighborhood in the purchase of an additional piece of equipment for the park.

Interested parties should contact Tuttle at 448-6162. 5/8/03

Parks panel votes against waste station

By Tony Dobrowolski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The Parks Commission has voted unanimously to send a letter to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act office opposing the location of a proposed waste transfer plant off Industrial Drive.

The MEPA office is taking written comments for an environmental impact report the company must file with the state, one of several regulatory hurdles the project must clear.

The letter, which the Parks Commission sent to MEPA yesterday, states in part that the board is opposed to the plant's location because it would be located too close to Clapp Park on West Housatonic Street, which is "arguably the most used park in the city."

"It would be better served in a different location," Chairman Michael P. Filpi said, quoting from the letter.

Valley Mill Corp. of Lee has proposed to build the facility, where construction and demolition waste would be sorted and recycled.

The project — which has triggered major neighborhood opposition — would consist of a 12,600-square-foot processing building, a two-story building that would house offices on the first floor and a glassed-in inspection station on the second, a truck scale, an access road and a rail spur that would run through the processing

WASTE, continued on B4

Parks panel votes against waste station

WASTE from B1

building.

It would occupy about 2 1/2 acres of a 13-acre site that Valley Mill owns. The company also owns Industrial Drive, a road that runs west off South Street where Lipton Energy and a Mobil station are located.

During Monday night's Parks Commission meeting, board member Eleanor Persip said she was in favor of the plant, but not at the site where it is proposed. She said people who live near the proposed site had asked that the facility be located in another area of the city.

"It isn't that I don't want the station there, it's just that it's such a congested area," Persip said.

Filpi said he didn't have a problem with the proposed location, but that he was going to vote against it based on information he had received from people who were against locating the transfer station on Industrial Drive. Filpi said those in favor of the proposal had yet to contact him.

The board's three other members did not speak at the meeting before the vote took place.

A small group of people opposed to the waste transfer plant attended the meeting but did not speak and left after vote. One man did thank the board for the way it had voted.

Tony Dobrowolski can be reached at tdobrowolski@berkshireeagle.com.

Black Bears' expenses questioned

By Tony Dobrowolski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The Parks Commission has decided to take a closer look at the city's licensing agreement with the Berkshire Black Bears after board members raised questions about some of the expenses the Northern League baseball club listed following its first season at Wahconah Park last year.

Following a lively discussion concerning the terms of the licensing agreement at Monday night's meeting, the board voted 4-1, with Commissioner John C. Marchesi opposed, to table the matter until it could schedule a meeting to discuss the expenses listed by the team.

Commissioners Eugene Nadeau and Marchesi said they had questions about some of the items the Black Bears had purchased, including new concession equipment, as well as \$3,500 the club listed for recycling expenses and \$700 for cleaning the roughly 4,000-seat stadium.

"This whole thing just sends up a lot of red flags that you've got to look at," Nadeau said.

Ward 1 City Councilor Robert Tuttle, who attended the meeting, suggested that the board "investigate" the nature of the Black Bears' expenses because they involve taxpayer money.

The Black Bears and the city signed the licensing agreement Nov. 27, 2001,

before several members of the current Parks Commission were on the board. Some members said they would not have approved the agreement if they had been on the commission at that time.

Two-year contract

Under the terms of its license agreement with the city, the Black Bears pay a license fee of \$75,000 each year of the two-year contract and are responsible for the maintenance of the playing field and upkeep for the park. Baseball has been played at Wahconah Park since 1919 but the grandstand was constructed from 1949 to 1950.

4/30/03 BEARS, continued on B4

Commission questions Black Bears' expenses

BEARS from B1

Michael Kardamis, the Black Bears' president and general manager, said yesterday that the club spent more than \$75,000 during its first year in Pittsfield last year.

But he said that if the Black Bears' expenses exceed the \$150,000 threshold stipulated in the two-year licensing agreement, the team, not the city, would pay for the additional expenditures.

Asked by the board to explain the city's position on the licensing agreement, City Solicitor Jeffrey A. Honig said he believed that the expenses the team listed — such as the new concession equipment — were allowed under a section of the contract governing "nonstructural repairs."

He said that that section of the licensing agreement was broadly written, but suggested that if the commissioners had problems with it, they should speak with the Black Bears.

Based on the licensing agreement, Honig said he didn't buy the suggestion that the Black

Bears were putting in expenses for items for which the city would have to pay.

"I just don't see that argument," Honig said.

"The feeling I get is that they are not trying to pull the wool over anybody's eyes," Honig said. "I think it's a good agreement that we have, and we should work within it."

Maintenance Foreman Anthony Stracuzzi said the items the Black Bears have purchased, which include new chairs and grand-

stand improvements, were made with the understanding that they would stay in Wahconah Park if the team leaves.

"If the high schools want to go in there and play football, we've got new cash registers and a hot dog machine to use," Stracuzzi said.

Improvements to Wahconah Park's playing field were made in 1975. In 1998, the city of Pittsfield spent \$300,000 on a new drainage system for the park and repairs to the grandstand.

The Pittsfield Gazette May 15, 2003

Bossidy Bucks expenditure approved for municipal parks

On a 10-1 vote Tuesday, city councilors approved a general plan to spend \$550,000 donated by Larry Bossidy for the city parks.

Last month, councilors narrowly rejected the same allocation from Bossidy's \$1 million gift.

Concerns ranged from philosophical questions about how much to spend at once to a sense that the plan might have been at odds with Bossidy's intent.

At-large Gerald Lee cast the lone dissenting vote this week, questioning why the parks department has discussed hiring a manager to oversee the expenditure. Lee previously cited a need for neighborhood involvement in aspects of planned park upgrades and wondered why a lump sum is being

sought rather than a project-by-project allocation.

Ward 6 councilor Dan Bianchi said the parks commission did "an admirable job" developing the plan, which will upgrade several fields, add some new ones and replace playground equipment.

Ward 2 councilor James Arpante

said "it's about time we get the ball rolling on the Bossidy money." He said that the donor "underestimated the ineptitude" of Pittsfield's political process when he didn't provide specific rules and timetables for spending the gift.

"We shouldn't have to debate weeks over this," agreed ward 3 councilor Mark Brennan.

At-large councilor Matt Kerwood supported the allocation but said it's unfortunate that the version approved was the one initially rejected by a subcommittee due to accounting questions.

"This order creates accounting complications," he said.

But the initial order was easily resurrected after the council voted down its successor.

Ward 5 councilor Rick Scapin said that regardless of the hiccups along the way, "it's nice to see finally we're going to move on."

Added Scapin: "I can't wait to name a park after Mr. Bossidy."

Smooth road predicted for City Council

COUNCIL from B1 11/6/03

position on the matter.

"I intend to fill that position," she said.

Hathaway said that she and James McGrath, the city's director of community services, "are in agreement that we need to improve the recreational offerings in the city. For example, we have almost nothing to serve senior citizens. We need a full-time person who can find out what the population would like to see and who can organize events. This is the kind of thing that goes to quality of life in the city, and it's an opportunity to showcase our natural resources."

Arlos and Scapin, the mayor said, "are allied in their wish" to retain Clifford J. Nilan as a member of the Parks Commission. Nilan is the only "holdover" appointment on the panel, to which Hathaway last year named five new members.

All but one of her proposed appointees — Marchesi — were endorsed by the council. A slim majority agreed with Scapin's assertion that an entirely new Parks Commission would not be in the city's best interest and that Nilan's long experience on the panel is a significant asset.

Supporters of Marchesi point to his many years of service as recreation director.

"Mr. Arlos and Mr. Scapin are allied in their wish to keep Mr. Nilan on," Hathaway said yesterday. "This falls into the same category of trying to undermine my work to rejuvenate the parks."

The recreation director's job has been posted. Requirements include a high school diploma and one- to three-years' experience in developing and/or managing recreational activities or programs.

"Preference given for a college degree in recreation or related field," the announcement reads.

The salary range is from \$30,355 to \$40,266 per year.

Arlos said yesterday that leaving the job unfilled is in Pittsfield's best financial interest. He also declared that the tasks of the recreation director have been successfully divided among three current employees of the Parks Department, including McGrath.

"It's working out beautifully," he said.

Hathaway disagrees.

"The individuals who have divided the responsibilities have resented it," she said, adding that the additional duties demand time that the employees should be putting in on the jobs they were hired to do.

"What the mayor should be doing is directing all her energy and time to confronting the fiscal crisis that this city will be facing rather than rewriting the job description to require a college degree," said Arlos. "The whole thing's absurd."

Scapin predicts smoother road for council

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The president of the City Council predicted yesterday that 2003 would be a "progressive year" for the council, which he said has "settled down" and is ready to get to work.

Yet even as Richard A. Scapin expressed hope that the sometimes-rocky relationship between the council and Mayor Sara Hathaway would improve, a controversy over the mayor's proposal to fill a key post in the Parks Department appeared to be brewing.

"This is not a rubber-stamp council, and they all have minds of their own, but we're starting to work together," Scapin said yesterday. "I think we have to prove a lot of things to the people of Pittsfield."

But relationship with mayor hits pothole over recreation position

I've heard people say that this is a bad council. It's not. It's a good council. We have five new councilors who started a year ago, and they're all good. Everybody has his own theories on what to do, and even though it's been a rocky road, I see us settling down. There is no one on that council who doesn't have the best interests of the city at heart."

Scapin also acknowledged that his first year as council president was not trouble free.

"I'm pretty much settled in the chair now, but it takes time," he said.

Among the matters that Scapin expects

the council to be closely involved with in 2003 is the consolidation of positions in municipal government, with an eye toward saving money that he believes is likely to be in short supply.

"We have to show the taxpayers that we're willing to tighten our belts and consolidate," said Scapin, citing, for example, an opportunity to consolidate the positions of municipal and School Department purchasing agents. Late last year, the city's purchasing agent, Robert B. Tone, resigned to take a post at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. The job has not yet been filled.

Scapin also declared his support for a petition filed by Councilor at large Peter G. Arlos in which Arlos seeks approval of a measure formally asking Hathaway not to fill the position of recreation director in the city's Parks Department. The post was left vacant by the retirement of John C. Marchesi, whom Hathaway nominated for a seat on the Parks Commission. The council has yet to act on the nomination.

The council president characterized Arlos' petition as an opportunity for Hathaway to demonstrate a willingness to support job consolidation in the interest of saving money.

Informed of Scapin's comments yesterday, Hathaway said she has staked out a

COUNCIL, continued on B4

The Pittsfield Gazette April 10, 2003

Parks board revisits Black Bears' 2002 Wahconah claims

Parks commissioners are taking a fresh look at the way the Berkshire Black Bears baseball team met its obligations to Wahconah Park during 2002.

Having previously endorsed the club's reported \$121,000 expenditures, the commission revisited the issue this week based on a communication from the city council's audit committee.

"I think that we really should review it," said Eleanor Persip.

"How this guy got away with this I don't know," said John Marchesi, who was not on the board when it first reviewed the expenditure list.

"This really has to be gone through," said Gene Nadeau, who voted against endorsing the list in December. "We didn't do this justice."

But Jane Bresnahan said what's done is done. "To go back and review the items now, I'm not sure what we could accomplish," she said.

Speaking during the public section of Monday's parks meeting, David Potts urged careful review.

Potts said that the city's contract with the Black Bears requires the club to spend \$150,000 over two years in tangible improvements at Wahconah Park. This in-kind "license fee" replaces any rent.

Potts says that Mayor Sara Hathaway and community services director James McGrath inappropriately allowed \$121,000 in dubious first-year expenditures which the commission then rubber-stamped.

"There was a deliberate attempt to circumvent the parks commission altogether," he said.

Among the questionable park improvements claimed by the Black Bears were cash registers, a nacho cheese warmer, pretzel display apparatus, a cleaning service and a beer cooler.

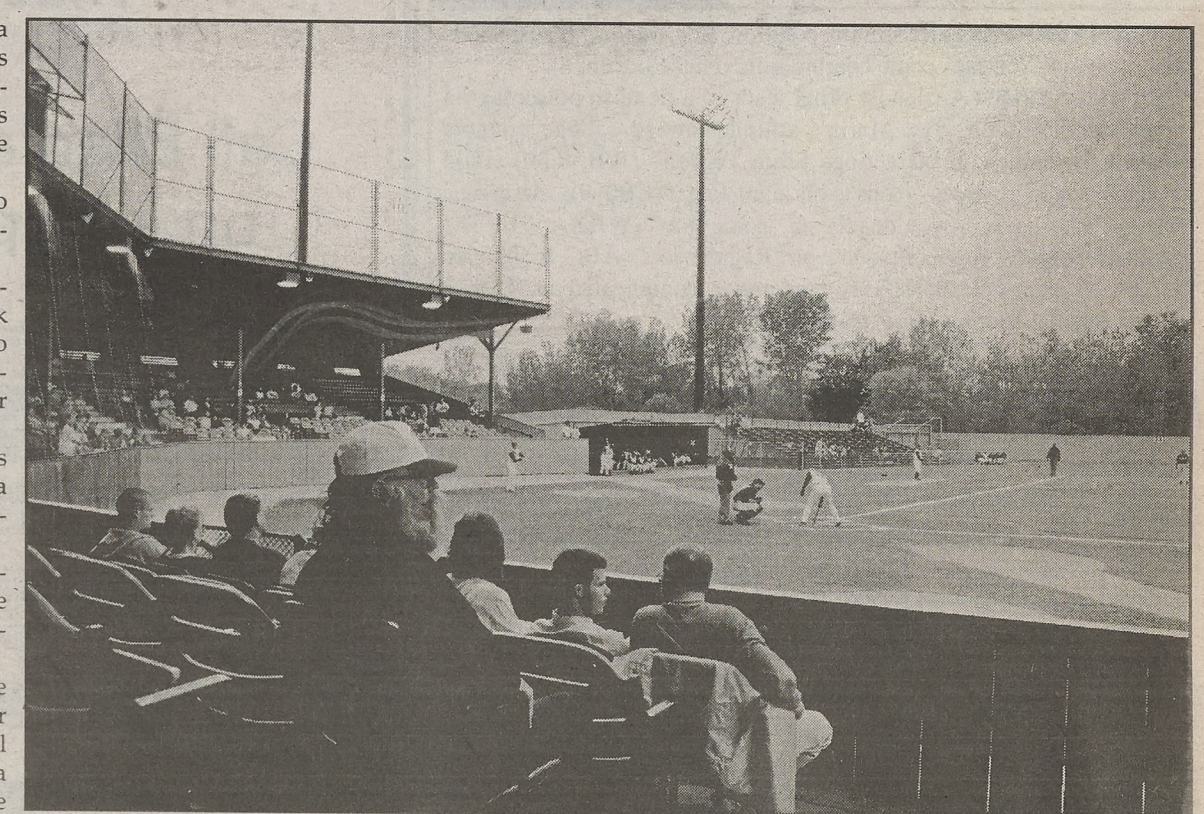
Potts noted that the Black Bears contracted with the Crowne Plaza Hotel for concession services last season.

"They may have shared the revenues they certainly didn't share the expense," said Potts. "The city subsidized the whole thing."

Potts said the contract with the Black Bears — championed by former Mayor Gerald Doyle, Jr. at the tail end of his administration — was a poor one for the city. But he said the commission must seriously meet its obligation as the pact's overseer.

"You're charged with that role," he said. "On this you have more power than the mayor."

Commission chairman Mike Filpi agreed that "there's areas I don't like



Parks commissioners are divided about whether to move on or question elements of the Wahconah Park upgrades that the Berkshire Black Bears claimed last year as their "in lieu" payment for use of the facility.

about" the contract but that this group inherited. He suggested that if commissioners have concerns about specific Wahconah investments or con-

tract clauses that acting city solicitor Jeff Honig be consulted.

Bresnahan echoed that point — "the contract is not written the way we would have" — but said that the board can't go back and disqualify already approved expenses.

"We gave the consent in December," she said. The focus should be on the future, she said.

Nadeau said he was disturbed by the Black Bears' facility expense report in December and still has concerns.

Aside from specific questionable expenses, Nadeau said that in general "I would certainly expect a lot better accounting."

Filpi agreed that some of Black Bears' submissions are "a bunch of junk" but said again that the pact predates the commission.

Marchesi said the pact varies substantially from past Wahconah Park leases and not in ways favorable to the city. "It should be null and void,"

he said.

Community services director Jim McGrath said he has spoken with Black Bears representatives about what will be considered legitimate park improvement expenses in 2003.

"The intent of the agreement was for substantial improvements to Wahconah Park," he said. "All of us took issues with the quality of their report [for 2002] ... but we have already had discussions with the Black Bears about this year."

Potts and Nadeau contend that the wording of the contract may make the city liable if the Black Bears have more than \$150,000 in accepted expenses over two years. "Now they only have to spend \$29,000 this year and if they pull out, do we pay them anything over what they spend on \$150,000," asked Nadeau.

With Bresnahan dissenting, the board voted 4-1 to table the issue to allow for further review.

Festival organizer sues Parks Commission

LAWSUIT from B1

The complaint states that Del Gallo and the organization would have to pay \$1,200 for police officers and \$350 for trash removal, sums that Del Gallo said are beyond the group's capacity to raise.

In the complaint, Del Gallo seeks an "immediate hearing" and an eventual jury trial on the matter. He also seeks the issuance of temporary and permanent injunctions "preventing the defendants from in any way preventing the plaintiffs from having a music festival at Burbank Park ... and from having a 'Kids Woodstock' and other performers in a tent by the bath house and

ordering the defendant to provide use of the Artabout stage at a rate of \$50 per day.

"The plaintiff seeks court costs, attorney fees, damages for loss [of] reputation, damages for loss of labor, damages for cost associated with having the music festival that may be lost, punitive damages and another relief appropriate by law," the complaint concludes.

Neither Hathaway nor Michael Filpi, chairman of the Parks Commission, could be reached yesterday for comment on Del Gallo's complaint.

Earlier this month, the commission expressed doubts about the adequacy of Del Gallo's arrangements concerning security and

trash removal.

Del Gallo told the commission that he will arrange to provide a half-dozen volunteers with T-shirts identifying them as "security" personnel and that the volunteers could also attend to rubbish collection and removal. Additional security could be provided by auxiliary police and by a deputy from the Berkshire County sheriff's office, he said.

Security, trash issues

Following a lengthy discussion with the commission, Del Gallo said he would consult with Riello concerning security requirements. According to the complaint, the chief advised Del Gallo that a minimum of four police officers would be required to provide adequate security at an event the size of the one planned.

James McGrath, the city's director of community services, told Del Gallo that while Riello "was willing to provide two free police officers ... the other two officers would have to be paid," the complaint reads.

Del Gallo contends that organizers of other events have not been required to comply with the conditions that he says officials have placed on him.

For instance, the complaint declares that the Fourth of July

Parade Committee "does not pay for police."

Councilor at large Peter M. Marchetti, the committee's treasurer, said yesterday that the committee has sometimes received police protection for the parade as an "in-kind service" from the city, but that there have been years when the committee has paid for police officers' time.

Marchetti said, "We meet with the mayor every June and ask for the same level of in-kind services we had in the past ... This year we were told that the city will try to provide us with the same services depending on its financial situation."

Earlier this year, Del Gallo unsuccessfully sought \$3,000 from the City Council. His petition, which was rejected on a 6-5 vote, stated that the money was needed "to make the Berkshire Music Festival on the lake possible, said event greatly contributing to the arts in the City of Pittsfield."

Del Gallo's complaint alleges that city officials are attempting to impose "prior restraint" on the festival and that they are illegally regulating the "content" of the "message(s)" of the festival.

"Requiring a premium for free speech because there might be a large audience, as the [defendants] have done here, is unconstitutional," Del Gallo's complaint reads.

Event organizer sues Parks Commission

Claims city panel's festival requirements violate free speech rights 6/30/03

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The city's Parks Commission, Mayor Sara Hathaway and Police Chief Anthony J. Riello are among the defendants named in a lawsuit brought by a Pittsfield man who contends that his First Amendment rights were infringed by city officials' actions in connection with a two-day music festival proposed for Burbank Park.

Rinaldo Del Gallo III of Nancy Avenue hopes to bring the Berkshire Music Festival to the park on Aug. 2 and 3. Earlier

this month, he told the Parks Commission that he expects upward of 1,000 people to attend the festival, which would feature attractions including more than a dozen live bands, various vendors and a hot-air balloon ride.

The park would remain open to the public, and no admission fee would be charged for the festival, which Del Gallo, a lawyer who is associated with the Berkshire Fatherhood Coalition, said he has been organizing for months on a budget of about \$1,000.

Del Gallo asserts that the city's re-

quirements for security and trash removal will effectively kill plans for the festival, which he said aims to promote shared parenting, an issue with which the Berkshire Fatherhood Coalition is closely involved.

"There was going to be a series of speakers that would speak for five minutes on the issue of shared parenting and then a band would play for one hour," Del Gallo wrote in a news release that accompanied his complaint. The release defines shared parenting as "both a legal regime and lifestyle choice whereby par-

ents divorce or separate, both share equally in the joy and burden of raising their child."

In his complaint, filed last week in Berkshire Superior Court, Del Gallo alleges that he and the Berkshire Fatherhood Coalition "have basically [been] priced out of the free speech/freedom to assemble/freedom to petition market" by requirements that he supply police protection and trash removal for the event.

LAWSUIT, continued on B4

Fitness trail planned at Coolidge Park

continued from page 1

ing it's an example of a civic group working to maximize municipal resources.

"I think it's wonderful," she said. Hathaway thinks that the exercise trail concept is one that's overdue for introduction in Pittsfield.

"I've been on fitness trails," she said. "They're tremendous ... This could be fun for adults and children."

Donald Taylor, school-community coordinator at Conte Community

School, says the elementary school would welcome the enhancement in its backyard.

"We certainly support it," he said. "That'll be pretty accessible to us during the school day."

Junior League representatives are scheduled to update the parks commission about the project during a meeting Monday at 7 p.m. at Springside House.

For information, call the Junior League office at 443-5151.

Fitness trail planned at Coolidge

Fun and exercise will march in tandem on a "fitness trail" a local organization is planning for Coolidge Park.

The Junior League of Berkshire County is soliciting donations for a proposed 13-station exercise layout in a field near Conte Community School.

"Too many kids spend time sitting in front of televisions and computers," said Beth Gannon, a club official who is also principal of St. Mark Middle School.

"The biggest part is we're trying to make the parks somewhere a family can go to enjoy themselves, so kids can get a real feel for legitimate exercise," she said.

The Junior League — a women's service organization — latched onto the project as members sought a way to promote child welfare.

Recent studies highlighting childhood obesity — combined with a political stalemate over redevelopment of Coolidge Park — led to the proposal, which has received preliminary approval from the parks commission.

"The focus of the league is on the well-being of children in Berkshire County — and too many kids these days are suffering from obesity," said Gannon.

Coolidge Park — a sprawling, largely undeveloped land mass that includes the Conte campus and trails leading to Taconic High School — has been the subject of considerable incon-



The Junior League of Berkshire County plans to purchase equipment for a 13-station "fitness trail" at Coolidge Park, near Conte Community School.

clusive discussion in recent years. "Coolidge Park is such a great location," she added. "There are several schools right here and it's a community area."

The club has launched a fund drive to purchase \$7,000 worth of equipment. The parks department will handle installation.

The stations consist of anchored metallic fitness apparatus, accompanied by explanatory signs about the benefits and techniques of particular exercises.

Stations include parallel bars, a beam jump, body curl board, hori-

zontal loop ladder, hip rotation bar, push-up bar, chin up bar and small climbing wall.

"It will keep kids physically active," said Gannon. "It's a lot of fun but there's also some learning involved in wanting kids to understand that their physical fitness is important to them."

If the fund drive succeeds, the club will order the equipment this fall with hopes of installation in the spring.

Mayor Sara Hathaway applauds the Junior League for the plan, say-

See FITNESS page 13

City parks board unhappy with plans for music event

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Concluding that the planning for a two-day music festival proposed for Burbank Park in August is inadequate, the Parks Commission on Monday sent the event's organizer back to the drawing board.

Rinaldo Del Gallo III hopes to bring the Berkshire Music Festival to the park on Aug. 2 and 3. He told the commission that he expects upwards of 1,000 people to attend the festival, which would feature attractions including live bands, various vendors and a hot-air balloon ride.

'Committee of one'

The park would remain open to the public and no admission fee would be charged for the festival, which Del Gallo, a lawyer who is associated with the Berkshire Fatherhood Coalition, said he has been organizing for months on a budget of about \$1,000. Del Gallo concurred with one parks commissioner's characterization of him as a "committee of one."

Earlier this year, Del Gallo unsuccessfully sought \$3,000 from the City Council. His petition, which was rejected on a 6-5 vote, stated that the money was needed "to make the Berkshire Music Festival on the lake possible, said event greatly contributing to the arts in the City of Pittsfield."

Officials have agreed to allow the use of a city-owned portable stage at the festival.

At their meeting on Monday night, commissioners questioned Del Gallo about his plans for security and trash removal, among other details.

Del Gallo told the commission that he will arrange to provide a half-dozen volunteers with T-

shirts identifying them as "security" personnel and that the volunteers could also attend to rubbish collection and removal. Additional security could be provided by auxiliary police and by a deputy from the Berkshire County Sheriff's Department, he said.

Following a lengthy discussion, during which commissioners and Parks Department officials expressed doubts about the adequacy of those arrangements, Del Gallo said he would consult with Police Chief Anthony J. Riello concerning security requirements.

Several commissioners said they believe that Del Gallo would have to hire police officers to be on duty at the festival.

That cost, in addition to others associated with putting on the festival, could consume his entire budget, said Del Gallo, who declared that city officials should be willing to invest in an event that he said will bring scores of money-spending visitors to the county.

"If we're going to have to go out and buy a bunch of stuff that costs a bunch of money, then we can't do it," he said.

Parks Commission member Jane Bresnahan said the commission will insist that sufficient measures be taken to assure that park visitors and property are protected.

"We're not going to skimp because you have \$1,000," she said.

Bresnahan also questioned whether the point of land that extends into Onota Lake just north of the main swimming beach will be large enough to accommodate the tethered hot-air balloon ride.

Del Gallo said the balloon's operator has told him that 150 feet of clearance is required. Replying to a question from Bresnahan, he said the operator has not seen the

area.

Parking is likely to be a problem at the event, said Parks Commission member John C. Marchesi, who suggested — as did other commissioners — that the number of visitors to the festival could far exceed 1,000, particularly if the weather is good.

"You're going to have a problem with parking," said Marchesi, who declared that he would not vote to approve Del Gallo's plan as long as it calls for use of virtually the entire beachfront at the park.

"If you limit it to the area around Controy Pavilion, I'd consider it," Marchesi said.

Anthony Stracuzzi, the Parks Department's maintenance foreman, told Del Gallo that an event on the scale of the one he is planning will generate large amounts of rubbish and that city crews will not dispose of it for free.

Trash trouble

If festival organizers don't pick up trash and dispose of it properly, said Stracuzzi, the city will do it and bill the organizers.

"We don't have the money to subsidize your festival," Stracuzzi said. "You've got to have a plan."

Del Gallo had originally envisioned holding a four-day event, but reduced it to two days following discussions with James Mc-

Grath, the city's director of public services.

Replying to commissioners' questions on Monday, Del Gallo said he would not consider shortening the festival to one day. He also said other venues had been

considered but were rejected "because we didn't think people would come."

"You're jumping into this with \$1,000 and no plan," said Parks Commission member Eugene Nadeau.

"This is planned. This is seriously planned," Del Gallo replied.

The commission will discuss Del Gallo's proposal at its next meeting, which is scheduled for July 7 at 7 p.m. at Springside House on North Street.

Parks upgrade endorsed

PARKS from B1

any other issue," said Lee, who joined City Councilors Peter G. Arlos, Peter M. Marchetti, Robert G. Tuttle and James A. Arpante in voting against the plan on April 22.

Last night, Lee said that the callers' concerns centered around such matters as the effects that reconstruction or addition of a field, for instance, could have on drainage on their properties.

Lee said that while he favors giving the Parks Commission wide discretion on how the funds are to be used, the City Council is nevertheless ultimately responsible for the funds and for safeguarding the interests of Pittsfield's citizens.

Neighbors of parks will be welcome to bring their concerns to the Parks Commission as the planning for individual projects gets under way, said James McGrath, the city's director of community services.

City Councilor Daniel L. Bianchi of Ward 6, a member of the Finance Committee, said the Parks Commission has demonstrated a willingness and ability to solicit public opinion about how the Bossidy donation should

be used in parks.

Bianchi, who was absent from the April 22 council meeting, said that he supports the plan. He also commended the Parks Commission for its work.

Since the council's vote last month, Bossidy has restated his wish that the funds be spent primarily on the renovation of playing fields.

In a letter written in reply to Councilor at large Peter G. Arlos' request for his endorsement of Arlos' proposal to place the funds in a trust whose income would benefit the parks, the former Honeywell Corp. CEO wrote that the purpose of his donation "is a simple one: I looked at the playing fields when I was [in Pittsfield] and I was appalled, and I want to see something done."

Bossidy said that his support for an "early expenditure" from the donation is derived from his belief that the city will not appropriate the funds necessary to accomplish the purpose.

Arlos later announced that he will drop his petition calling for establishment of the Lawrence A. Bossidy Trust Fund for Parks.

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5/17/03

Parks upgrade gets committee's OK

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — A City Council committee last night endorsed the Parks Commission's plan for spending up to \$550,000 of a donation given to Pittsfield by Lawrence A. Bossidy on improvements at city parks.

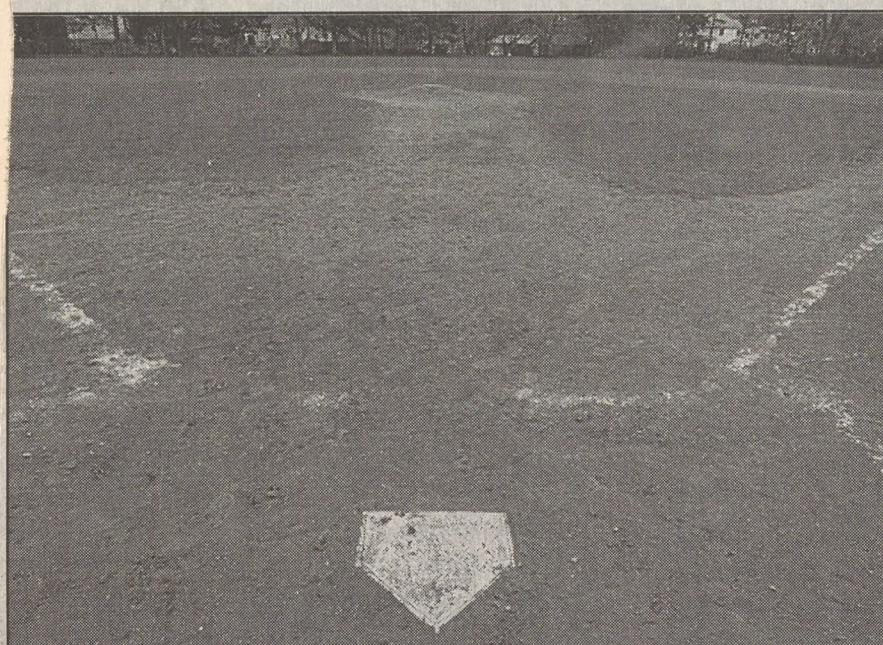
The council's Finance Committee voted 4-1 to forward the plan to the full council with a recommendation that it be approved. The move gives the council a second opportunity to consider the matter: On April 22, the council rejected the plan by a 5-5 vote. Under council rules, a tie vote defeats a measure.

Lee votes no

Councilor at large Gerald M. Lee, who cast the lone "no" vote at the Finance Committee's meeting last night, said he did so because the Parks Commission's plan does not contain enough specific information to adequately address the concerns of residents who live near city parks.

"I've gotten more calls on this than on

PARKS, continued on B4



Julie A. Brown / Berkshire Eagle Staff

The baseball field at Deming Park, with its chewed-up infield turf, is one of several playing fields included in a plan for refurbishment with money donated by city native Lawrence A. Bossidy.

5/17/03

Festival to mix music, message

By Jack Dew
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — With more than 30 bands scheduled to play on two stages over two days, it is certain that something will be happening along the shores of Onota Lake this weekend.

But just what it will look and sound like, and whether the music will be drowned out by the political message of its impresario, is uncertain.

The Berkshire Music Festival on the Lake is the creation of Rinaldo Del Gallo III, a self-employed attorney who works out of his home and

heads an unincorporated group, the Berkshire Fatherhood Coalition, that has become a loud, persistent voice in county politics over the past year.

He started the Fatherhood Coalition, he said, after he "got screwed in the New York court system," and "realized how incredibly biased the courts were and how much they were starting to destroy children. It is very important that children have fathers in their lives."

While he says he represents a large group of fathers in Berkshire County, he refused to name any of his members or other leaders of his

group.

Despite a budget of less than \$1,200, Del Gallo has been able to attract a large number of musical acts, including some of the county's biggest names in children's entertainment, to play for free during the two-day festival that he is billing as a "celebration of shared parenting" and has touted as a "Kids' Woodstock."

Shared parenting

Del Gallo said he plans to speak for five or 10 minutes before each performance on the adult stage, discussing shared parenting and

telling stories of fathers who have been wronged by the courts and of ex-wives who have won custody of their children despite making false claims of rape and being accused of arson and convicted of forgery.

Del Gallo has become a ubiquitous advocate for shared parenting, which in his eyes would rewrite state divorce laws to make joint custody of children the default position of Massachusetts courts. Unless one were shown to be an unfit parent, the father and mother would share the responsi-



Ben Garver

Rinaldo Del Gallo

FESTIVAL, continued on A4

On the Web: www.BerkshireEagle.com

Pittsfield, Massachusetts, Wednesday, October 1, 2003

Black Bears' future in Pittsfield remains fuzzy

By Tony Dobrowolski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The Berkshire Black Bears' two-year licensing agreement with the city of Pittsfield to use Wahconah Park expires Oct. 31, but as of yesterday team and city officials had yet to schedule a formal meeting to discuss the baseball team's future.

Black Bears' principal owner Jonathan Fleisig had told The Eagle in August that he would

probably make a decision on the team's future in Pittsfield "sometime around Oct. 1."

Reached at his office in New York City yesterday, Fleisig said he had yet to schedule a formal meeting with Mayor Sara Hathaway, and had not yet made a decision on whether to keep the Northeast League team in Pittsfield for the 2004 season.

"No, not yet," Fleisig said. "But when I do I will confer with the mayor."

"I haven't spoken to the mayor or set up a meeting," he added. "I haven't even called her yet."

Making wedding plans

Fleisig said he is engaged and has spent most of his time since the Black Bears season ended Labor Day weekend with marriage plans.

"That's been my top priority," he said.

Hathaway confirmed she had not been in touch with Fleisig, but said she had been informed

by team and city officials that Fleisig would contact her when he was ready to make a decision.

"I don't have a meeting on my calendar right now," Hathaway said.

She said the sooner Fleisig lets her know what he plans to do next year, the better it will be for the city.

"Actually, when we met several weeks ago we thought it would be easier for our planning purposes to have earlier notification," Hathaway said. "But their contract allows them to make up their minds in October, I believe."

The Black Bears have not fared well at either the box office or in the standings in the two years they have spent in Pittsfield. The Black Bears finished eighth and last in the Northeast League in attendance this year, drawing 43,846 fans in 45 home games, an average of 974 fans per game. The Black Bears were the only

team in the league to average fewer than 1,000 fans per game this year.

New Haven report

With the Black Bears' lease in Pittsfield expiring, the Northeast League is exploring the possibility of relocating a team to New Haven, Conn., for the 2004 season, according to a Connecticut newspaper.

The New Haven Register has

BEARS, continued on A4

A4 — The Berkshire Eagle, Wednesday, October 1, 2003

Gener

Black Bears' future still looks fuzzy

BEARS from A1

reported that Northeast League Commissioner Miles Wolff will visit that city this week on a "fact-finding mission" that could lead to the league placing a team there in time for the 2004 season.

The Register also reported that Robert Wirz, the former owner of the Northeast League's Waterbury, Conn., franchise, which relocated to Lynn this year, is the "official liaison" for a "unnamed owner" of one league franchise, and that there is at least one Northeast League owner "who is ready to move his franchise to Yale Field ASAP."

Yale Field is the former home of the Class AA Eastern League New Haven Ravens. The Ravens are moving to Manchester, N.H., for the 2004 season after 10 years of playing in New Haven.

In a telephone interview from the Northeast League offices in Durham, N.C. yesterday, Wolff confirmed he is visiting New Haven tomorrow. But Wolff said it was too early to tell if any Northeast League team would relocate there for the 2004 season.

"I read that same article," Wolff said. "I'm going to see if New Haven is an option for us. I don't think we're far enough along to say if it's this team or that team [that would move]. We have to see if it's OK for the league."

"I hate to move franchises," Wolff said. "It's not good for the league to keep moving around. We just went in there [Pittsfield] two years ago ... But it's tough to tell an owner to lose money in a market."

Wolff said the Northeast

League recently held its league meetings and that Fleisig gave no indication that he would move the Black Bears out of Pittsfield.

Yale Field, built in 1927 then renovated 10 years ago, has a seating capacity of 12,000, almost three times the size of Wahconah Park, which seats 4,500. New Haven is also located roughly 75 miles east of New York City, where Fleisig lives.

'Gag orders'

When asked if he was interested in moving the Black Bears to New Haven, Fleisig said he could not comment because the league's eight owners agreed to "strict gag orders" when it came to the future movement of any franchises at the recent league meetings.

"So I can't answer that because I have to abide by the league first," he said.

Fleisig added that any comment he made on the New Haven situation could also affect another Northern League team's future.

The Register also reported that the Northeast League was expected to "debut" a team in a new stadium in Danbury, Conn., in 2004.

Wolff said the Northeast League placing a team in Danbury is "a possibility" that appears to be fading because the league has yet to receive word on when that stadium will be completed. He said the Allentown Ambassadors have considered moving to Danbury unless a new stadium is built in that Pennsylvania city. The Ambassadors drew an average of 1,020 fans per game this year, ahead of only the Black Bears in the league's attendance

standings.

Hathaway said she was unaware the Northeast League was interested in relocating a team in New Haven, except for what was mentioned in a letter to the editor published in yesterday's Eagle.

"I have no reason to believe it's Jonathan Fleisig," she said.

In August, Fleisig said he wanted the Black Bears to remain in Pittsfield, but questioned whether there was enough money in both Pittsfield and Berkshire County to make it feasible.

Hathaway said yesterday she also wants the Black Bears to remain in Pittsfield, and is willing to work with the team to increase advertising revenue.

"I know that they were concerned about the ad revenues in the Berkshires," Hathaway said. "From what I've heard there are very few ad-dependent businesses that are seeing the ad revenues they saw two or three years ago. ... It's not about Pittsfield or baseball. It's a flat market for ad revenue."

Under the terms of the current licensing agreement, the Black Bears are required to spend \$75,000 each year toward the maintenance and upkeep of Wahconah Park.

"I'm certainly willing to work with him on the licensing agreement for Wahconah Park to take some of the financial burden off if they show their budget can sustain the money they were required to contribute over the last two years," she said.

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Message intermingles with music

FESTIVAL from A1

bility of rearing children, presumably erasing the need for child support payments and giving both an equal say in parenting decisions.

His music festival is dedicated to spreading his message. Through a lawsuit filed against the city, which he claimed was trying to suppress his rights of free speech, Del Gallo has been able to obtain two police officers at reduced rates and to evade a city demand that he obtain insurance to protect Pittsfield against liability.

He has won free use of the park, a mobile stage and the Controy Pavilion, all by making frequent trips to meetings of the City Council and Parks Commission and peppering both with a barrage of petitions and requests.

Performers concerned

Interviews with a number of the artists scheduled to perform revealed that almost none knew much about Del Gallo or his cause; most said they agreed to play for free because it seemed like a nice event that would give them exposure to a large audience. Many were uncomfortable when informed of his political message, unsure of what it meant and concerned that the event could veer from a music festival to a political rally.

Del Gallo also takes more controversial stands.

He wants the state to change its laws so police would no longer be able to arrest someone on a domestic violence charge unless the allegation is "supported by credible corroborating evidence, such as, but not limited to, physical corroborating evidence, or by a credible, third-party witness."

Asked about his position on domestic abuse laws and issues like child support payments, Del Gallo said that "most fathers aren't deadbeats, they are dead broke," but declined to discuss further specifics, saying the music festival is about shared parenting only.

Endorsement required

Though most bands and performers interviewed Tuesday said they had only the vaguest information about Del Gallo's stand on shared parenting, Del Gallo said that he had made his position clear and that all the performers endorsed his views.

"Some are going to be more vociferous about it than others, but they are representing that they are supporting it, and if they are not supporting it, they are not supposed to be there," he said. "We told everyone, in no uncertain terms, that you have to support shared parenting to be in the music festival."

Following an interview yesterday in which Del Gallo said that he had secured an endorsement of shared parenting from every performer at his festival, he said he sent out an e-mail to all those scheduled to play.

It reads: "You must be in favor of shared parenting to participate in the music festival. Your participation in the music festival will symbolize that, generally speaking, you favor 'shared parenting.' You cannot oppose shared parenting. You cannot be indifferent to shared parenting. You don't have to talk to the media or be loud or say anything at all — you just have to be in support of shared parenting."

As of yesterday evening, Del Gallo said none of the bands or artists had called to withdraw after receiving his message, and said he didn't expect that any would.

In support of children

Vikki True, a well-known, locally based jazz singer, said her decision to perform was made in igno-

Berkshire Music Festival on the Lake

The following is the schedule for this weekend's Berkshire Music Festival at Onota Lake, in Burbank Park. Admission and parking are free; the schedule is subject to change. The event is organized by the Berkshire Fatherhood Coalition, a group of political activists led by local attorney Rinaldo Del Gallo, which advocates "shared parenting" in court cases involving custody disputes. At the beginning of each hour, every musical act on the Artabout Stage will be preceded by a five-minute discussion by Del Gallo on these issues.

Saturday / Artabout Stage

11:00-12:00 Lower Pride. Soulful rock.
12:00-1:00 Chris and Meredith Thompson. Folk-rock.
1:00-2:00 R&R Express.
2:00-3:00 Stanley Maxwell. Funky Jazz.
3:00-4:00 The Terraplanes. Blues Straight-up.
4:00-5:00 The Patriokings.
5:00-6:00 Domino Theory.
6:00-7:00 PIMP. Rock.
7:00-8:00 Melodrome. Modern rock with a retro-edge.

Saturday / Kids' Woodstock

11:00-12:00 Andy Glockenspiel. Children's music.
12:00-1:00 Robbins-Zust Family Marionette Company
1:00-2:00 The Bowey the Clown Magic Show.
2:00-3:00 Spaghetti Cake. Jam rock for kids.
3:00-4:00 Vikki True. Jazz for children.
4:00-5:00 Happy Dan the Music Man.
5:00-6:00 Andy Glockenspiel.
6:00-7:00 Spaghetti Cake.
6:00-7:00 Picnic, games.
7:00-7:30 Erinn Brown.
7:30-8:00 Song of Samuel.

Sunday / Artabout Stage

11:00-12:00 Out of Nowhere.
12:00-1:00 Fly By Night. Rock.
1:00-2:00 The Feed
2:00-3:00 TBA
3:00-4:00 The Engine Room
4:00-5:00 Flying Lessons. Jam/groove.
5:00-6:00 Midnight Jamboree. Jam.
6:00-7:00 Northern Spy. Rock/blues.
7:00-8:00 Circle of Stone.

Sunday / Kids' Woodstock

11:00-12:00 Scott Kepnes. Children's music.
12:00-1:00 Johnny Mystic.
1:00-3:00 David Grover and the Big Bear Band.
3:00-3:30 Scott Kepnes. Children's music.
3:30-4:00 Young Song.
4:00-5:00 Robbins-Zust Family Marionette Company.
5:00-6:00. Crystal Brook. Soft rock/folk.
6:00-7:00. Nappy Martin. Folk.
7:00-8:00 Thom Pease, Tom Gizzi, Connie Boyle.

rance of Del Gallo's politics and was motivated by a desire to play for children.

"I am an advocate of rights for all human beings," True said in a telephone interview Tuesday. "I'm performing in this festival because I've written a jazz program for children to introduce them to this phenomenal indigenous music. ... If he wants to speak before my act, he can limit it to an introduction of my band and the importance of music in the world. I am not there in support of any causes. I am there in support of children."

Sue Birk, of the Connecticut-based band Spaghetti Cake, said neither she nor her band members knew of Del Gallo's political beliefs, other than the notion that he supports shared parenting, though they weren't certain of the specifics of the issue. "We do wish we knew ahead of time, because we do feel that, in some way, by playing this, we are endorsing his thing. We are kind of bummed that we didn't know ahead of time," she said.

Kjell Ostlund, of the rock band The Patriokings, said Del Gallo "didn't go into detail about what his position was. ... What we are doing is trying to get in front of as many people as we can, so we are not supporting his position, we're just playing."

David Grover, leader of the popular Big Bear Band, said he is playing in support of his own interpretation of shared parenting, which to him means both encouraging the courts to let fathers play a bigger role in their children's lives and encouraging fathers to stay involved, as well.

"I am not completely aware of the political objectives of this group, and I may not agree with them on all things," Grover said. "But as a general rule, people who take on issues that are not popular are generally people not in the mainstream but trying to get there. There has been a lot of trouble around this festival. If it were me, I would not have caused that trouble, but I also know there

is more than one way to accomplish goals."

Del Gallo has become a frequent presence at City Council meetings and other political events. He has convinced city officials and state politicians to address gatherings sponsored by his coalition, and is now running for an at-large council seat.

Advocates for women and other groups, however, worry that Del Gallo's advocacy represents a kind of tunnel vision, that he can only see where divorce courts have wronged dads and is blind to issues of walk-away fathers, dead-beat dads and batterers.

By crusading for shared parenting, they fear that he is really trying to drag the judicial system 20 years into the past, when crimes against women by their husbands were deemed family matters in which the police did not want to meddle.

Marcia Savage, executive director of the Elizabeth Freeman Center, which provides services to rape victims and battered women in Berkshire County, said Del Gallo's position that the police are too quick to arrest accused batterers and the courts too swift to grant restraining orders would "not only take us back to where we were, but we would be back to where we were and worse."

"We agree that a father's presence in the life of the children is, under most circumstances, a positive thing, but not if there has been violence perpetrated on the children or the mother of the children," Savage said.

Del Gallo asserts that men lose custody of their children "90 percent of the time" in contested divorce cases, and that he only wants to bring balance to the system. "On the issue of child support, there are a bunch of people who say, 'Geez, isn't this just a bunch of guys who want to get out of child support?' To them I respond: What is morally abhorrent about people wanting to raise their own children instead of paying someone else to do it?"

Jack Dew can be reached at jdew@berkshireeagle.com.

Parks commission approves controversial music festival

By Scott Eldridge II

The parks commission on Monday gave Rinaldo Del Gallo III and the Berkshire Fatherhood Coalition permission to hold a controversial music festival at Onota Lake, as long as the group meets several provisions.

The two-day event — billed as the "Berkshire Music Festival" — is scheduled for August 2 and 3. The festival will feature musical acts and a "Kids' Woodstock" with children's performers. Also, Del Gallo has received permission to place a tethered hot-air balloon ride and vendors in the Controy Pavilion — a rare allowance from the commission.

The commission will require the organization to pay for two police officers, confine the festival to the Controy Pavilion land and provide a certificate of insurance. The commission declined to allow illegal vehicle parking but waived the cost of trash cleanup, a bill they previously asked Del Gallo to cover.

Del Gallo said he cannot meet the

commission's police and insurance requests. He said he is working with an event budget of \$1,100.

"Are you going to ask me to do something I can't do," Del Gallo said. "I'm being priced out of the free speech market."

"We did our part as commissioners as far as I'm concerned," said commission chairman Mike Filpi. "We just approved your event."

The commissioners said they support the festival but want to make sure the city and the commissioners were covered if something goes wrong. For more than one and one half hours they discussed the necessity of certain stipulations they asked of Del Gallo.

"We can't lessen our requirements and put the people of Pittsfield at risk, or the anyone attending your concert at risk," said commissioner Gene Nadeau.

However Del Gallo insists that the requirements restrict the event. Police chief Anthony Riello said the department would donate two officers,

but two additional officers would need to be paid for by the fatherhood coalition. Del Gallo said he can't afford the police costs — which would total \$1,200 for the two days — and insisted that auxiliary police would suffice.

"We have to take what [Riello's] word is," said Nadeau. "[You have to] satisfy that requirement."

Parks director Jim McGrath said the event also needs a certificate of insurance releasing the city in the case of "unforeseen circumstances." Del Gallo had submitted a release form, but McGrath forwarded the form to city lawyers to determine if it was an effective form of coverage. If not, Del Gallo said he will not be able to afford liability insurance.

"I'm going to tell you right now that I can't pay for police," Del Gallo said. "[And] the insurance is questionable."

Commissioner Jane Bresnahan encouraged Del Gallo to seek out sponsors, saying adequate time remains to raise funds.

Del Gallo also serves as attorney for the Fatherhood Coalition and is suing the city for alleged free speech violations. The five parks commissioners and McGrath are among the 14 defendants, along with Riello and Mayor Sara Hathaway. He argues that the city is stifling the political speech of the fatherhood coalition by requiring police presence at the event at a cost he cannot pay. Prior to Monday, the park commission had never approved or rejected the plan, instead tabling it at several meetings until Del Gallo answered commissioners' questions.

"We have never really denied this," said commissioner Eleanor Persip. "All you had to do is come back to us."

Persip said that Del Gallo never made clear that the music festival would be a political event.

"You have never asked us if you could have speakers or informed us if you had speakers," she said. This "pertinent information" was left out of presentations Del Gallo made to the board, which has been reviewing various plans for the festival since April.

Del Gallo said that when parks commissioners asked the content of lyrics, it allowed "unbridled discretion" to stop the festival. He also claimed that the police requirement is a "content-based" decision which would violate the First Amendment.

McGrath said he had discussed police presence with Captain John O'Neil, who said four officers would provide "adequate police coverage" for the estimated crowd of 800 to 1,000. McGrath said he never raised a content issue with O'Neil.

Del Gallo disagreed, saying that all of the requirements placed on the event were "inherently" content-based. Persip said they were requiring nothing more from Del Gallo than they would for other groups or individuals planning large events.

"Personally, Mr. Del Gallo, you're not going to find a more bleeding heart liberal in this city," Filpi said. "To say that we're short-changing you in some of this stuff is unfair ... It's got nothing to do with your bands, your concert, your speeches."

Parks benefactor irked

PITTSFIELD — The donor of a \$1 million gift to the city's parks said yesterday that he is frustrated with the city's inability to spend the money on much-needed upgrades to the city's playing fields.

Lawrence A. Bossidy, the retired CEO of Honeywell Inc., donated \$1 million to the city after he withdrew his plans to bring a minor league baseball team to Pittsfield in 2001. But two years later, most of the money has not been spent and the work he feels is urgently needed has not begun.

The gift came at the conclusion of a lengthy debate in Pittsfield over whether the city should build a new baseball stadium. Bossidy had hoped to acquire a minor league team to play in the new park, but his plans fell apart when legislation to create the Pittsfield Civic Authority, which would have run the facility, was defeated in a special election.

"I was perhaps disillusioned by the situation when I tried to bring the baseball team there, and this is just another example," Bossidy said. "... How does the place ever grow and develop in the midst of all this seamless, endless negativity?"

Bossidy Bucks strategy outlined

continued from page 1

Monday, with plans for further discussion on March 17. The spending proposal will then be forwarded to Mayor Sara Hathaway.

John Marchesi refused to completely endorse the list in its current form because he believes Bossidy only wants funds spent on fields, not playground equipment. Eleanor Persip said that she discussed the money with Bossidy, who said fields were his first priority but that other park enhancements were welcome.

"I will not vote to spend anything on playground equipment until we have it in writing from him," said Marchesi.

"Yes, fields are his first priority," said Persip, "but he has no problem with it all."

Persip said that updating and expanding field options is a universal priority, but that those investments primarily benefit competitive leagues.

"I would also like to take care of the average and below-average children as well as the gifted athletes," she said.

Chairman Mike Filpi feels that McGrath's priority list addresses varied constituencies.

"I think this is a good comprehensive list," he said.

Filpi said that every effort should be made to utilize volunteers and in-kind services to reduce costs and maximize future investment options.

McGrath stressed that the numbers are "best guess estimates" and the list will be "a moving target over time."

Some commissioners questioned plans to contribute \$20,000 toward a concession stand project initiated by the North Little League.

McGrath said that the investment ties into another project, the "boundless playground" targeted for Springside Park. The goal is to have the concession stand incorporate a handicapped-accessible restroom for use by visitors to the playground.

Set aside

Jane Bresnahan said that it's essential the overall plan include provisions for investing some money, a concept raised by several people during the public input session.

"Do we put it all into projects or do we take a portion and invest if for year after year?" she said.

Bresnahan said the commission needs guidance on how to structure such an ongoing account.

Persip noted that an endowment was also part of Bossidy's initial intent, to ensure future funds to maintain upgraded facilities.

"Larry strongly advised to put some of this money away," she said, "so we have something to fall back on."

Filpi said determining how much to set aside — and how to manage it — requires planning. He also expressed concern that given current interest rates, it may be hard to create a sustaining fund that generates enough income to be worthwhile.

McGrath said it's fine to leave some funds for future use, but that money should be spent soon to make a visible impact.

"I'd much rather see us tackle some

of these projects right off the bat," he said. "Now's the great time with this windfall."

Filpi agreed that the money can make an impact now and that the gift has been sitting largely unused for almost two years. "I think we should go forward ASAP," he said.

Field needs

Parks maintenance foreman Tony Stracuzzi said that field upgrades are an urgent need.

"More people at this point are being hurt on the ballfields," he said.

And demand for improved and new fields is high. "There's people coming out of the woodwork for fields," said Stracuzzi.

Based on Marchesi's concerns, the commission instructed McGrath and Filpi to write to Bossidy to ensure that the plan of splitting the remaining money between fields, playground equipment and an investment/capital account falls within the spirit of his donation.

Filpi promised to move rapidly, but opposed Marchesi's formal motion for the letter and to hold off on any playground investments.

McGrath emphasized that the plan will require mayoral and city council approval before any monies are spent, prompting frustration from Marchesi.

"By the time we get permission to spend this money it will be next year," said Marchesi.

At the end of 2001, the parks commission and city council authorized an expenditure of approximately \$160,000 from the gift for vehicles and parks maintenance equipment.

The Pittsfield Gazette February 27, 2003

Lawsuit against Pittsfield dropped

By D.R. Bahlman
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — A lawsuit brought against the city by the organizer of a music festival on Onota Lake was settled yesterday, 24 hours before it was to be heard by a Berkshire Superior Court judge.

Under terms of the settlement, Rinaldo Del Gallo III and the Berkshire Fatherhood Coalition will pay Pittsfield \$400 and withdraw the lawsuit.

For its part, the city will provide police protection at the festival on Aug. 2 and 3 and drop its demand that Del Gallo secure a certificate of insurance that indemnifies the city against liability claims that may arise from the event.

Free-speech complaint

In his complaint against city officials, including Mayor Sara Hathaway, the Parks Commission and Police Chief Anthony J. Riello, Del Gallo contended that by imposing certain requirements on the festival — such as paying for police protection — city officials were pricing him out of the “First Amendment marketplace.”

Del Gallo is spokesman for the Berkshire Fatherhood Coalition, an unincorporated group that Del Gallo said “broke away” from a larger organization some time ago.

During meetings at which he presented his case for the use of Burbank Park for the festival, he told the Parks Commission that there would be some “political speech” at the event concerning shared parenting, an issue with which the coalition is involved.

On July 7, the commission voted unanimously to allow Del Gallo to hold the festival at Burbank Park, but the panel attached several conditions. Among them was that Del Gallo pay for two city police officers to patrol the festival and that he secure a certificate of insurance.

Del Gallo contended that meeting either of those conditions would decimate the coalition's budget for the festival, which he said was about \$1,000.

In his Superior Court complaint, Del Gallo cited U.S. Supreme Court decisions that he interprets to mean that the city would infringe the First Amendment rights of people who cannot afford to meet such conditions by insisting that they be met before use of public property is allowed.

“It's a good day for the city, it's a good day for the arts and it's a good day for the First Amendment,” Del Gallo said of yesterday's settlement.

Of city officials, Del Gallo said that he is “glad they decided to

LAWSUIT, continued on B4

Del Gallo drops lawsuit against Pittsfield

LAWSUIT from B1

work with us,” but declared that when regulations concerning the use of public property for special events are promulgated in Pittsfield, they should make provisions for groups or individuals who can't afford to comply with the regulations or associated conditions.

City doesn't concede

Hathaway said that she agreed to the settlement after consulting with Chris Dodig, an attorney associated with the Adams law firm of Donovan & O'Connor. The firm has been retained to perform

city solicitor's duties for Pittsfield until a permanent city solicitor is hired.

“It would have cost us much more to defend the case than to provide the support that Mr. Del Gallo is seeking at this point,” Hathaway said yesterday. “It seemed wise to me to concede the two points that were in dispute. I won't concede that we did anything wrong here. The city's requirements were reasonable. ... Burbank Park is a heavily used facility every summer weekend, and the scale of the event envisioned by Mr. Del Gallo would have consumed a lot of space and

a lot of resources.”

D.R. Bahlman can be reached at dbahlman@berkshireeagle.com.

7/11/03

B4 — The Berkshire Eagle, Tuesday, June 3, 2003

Sports fields opposed at Springside

SPRINGSIDE from B1

and Eugene Nadeau, that city officials should look to other publicly owned land for the two fields.

Commissioners applauded

To loud applause, Marchesi and Nadeau declared their opposition to situating the field at Springside. Eleanor Persip, the third parks commissioner at yesterday's meeting, took no position on the matter.

Neither Parks Commission Chairman Michael Filpi nor Jane Bresnahan, a member of the commission, were present at the meeting.

“We feel that the original idea of a public park, especially Springside, is to have a dynamic balance of active and specific single-use recreational activities around the periphery, with a central major core reserved for multiple public uses: walking, jogging, bicycling, family picnics, bird watching, plant and animal study and simple enjoyment of nature,” reads a letter to the Parks Commission from Royal Hartigan of Pittsfield, a member of the Friends of Springside Park.

Noting that a current proposal for use of funds donated by Pittsfield native Lawrence E. Bossidy is to situate new playing fields “at the core of the park's natural space, the center of the largest meadow,” Hartigan declared that such a move would be detrimental to the park and urged the commission to consider other locations for the fields.

Last night, Hartigan said establishment of the fields would “limit the [meadow] area to a single use” and invite the future development of lighting, parking lots and paved roads.

“We feel that there already is a developed area at the northern part of the park near Benedict Road that has the electricity, lighting, water and toilets that a series of playing fields would require,” Hartigan wrote. “The Benedict Road area also has a paved road and parking lot that the proposed area does not, thus saving the proposed area from unnecessary paving, new parking lot construction, and the traffic and noise that would accompany them, and effectively destroy the park's essence.”

Sports fields opposed at Springside

By D.R. Bahlman

Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — A proposal to situate soccer and lacrosse fields in the center of Springside Park is being opposed by a group of citizens who contend that the fields would destroy the natural beauty of a large meadow in the park.

About a dozen representatives of the Friends of Springside Park attended a meeting of the Parks Commission yesterday to urge the panel to establish the fields elsewhere.

Their arguments apparently persuaded two commissioners, John C. Marchesi

SPRINGSIDE, continued on B4

6/3/02

Ecologically diverse

Victor Capelli, a naturalist who conducts tours and seminars at Springside Park, termed the park “the most ecologically diverse area in Pittsfield — bar none.”

Capelli said at least 50 species of trees and 125 species of wildflowers are to be found in the park, and he urged the commission to protect it from development.

The proposal is a “preliminary” one, James McGrath, the city's director of community services, said at the meeting. He said the city badly needs two new fields to accommodate growing interest in the sports of soccer and lacrosse.

Ideally, said McGrath, the two fields would be situated “side by side,” which is why Springside Park — with its expanses of open space — is under consideration as a possible location for them.

“It's incumbent on us to look across the gamut of city properties” for a suitable location for the fields, said McGrath.

However, McGrath stressed that “nothing is set in stone” and that the proposal is still very much under discussion, as are other aspects of a plan for use of the Bossidy donation.

Replying to a question, McGrath said it's likely that the plan will be discussed at virtually every Parks Commission meeting for the foreseeable future. The commission meets on the first and third Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in Springside House, 874 North St.

Information about agendas is available by calling the commission at 499-9343.

City Parks Dept. to set priorities for field projects

PARKS from B1

Iacrosse fields at Springside Park, where it would also install bathrooms at a ball field.

Playground equipment

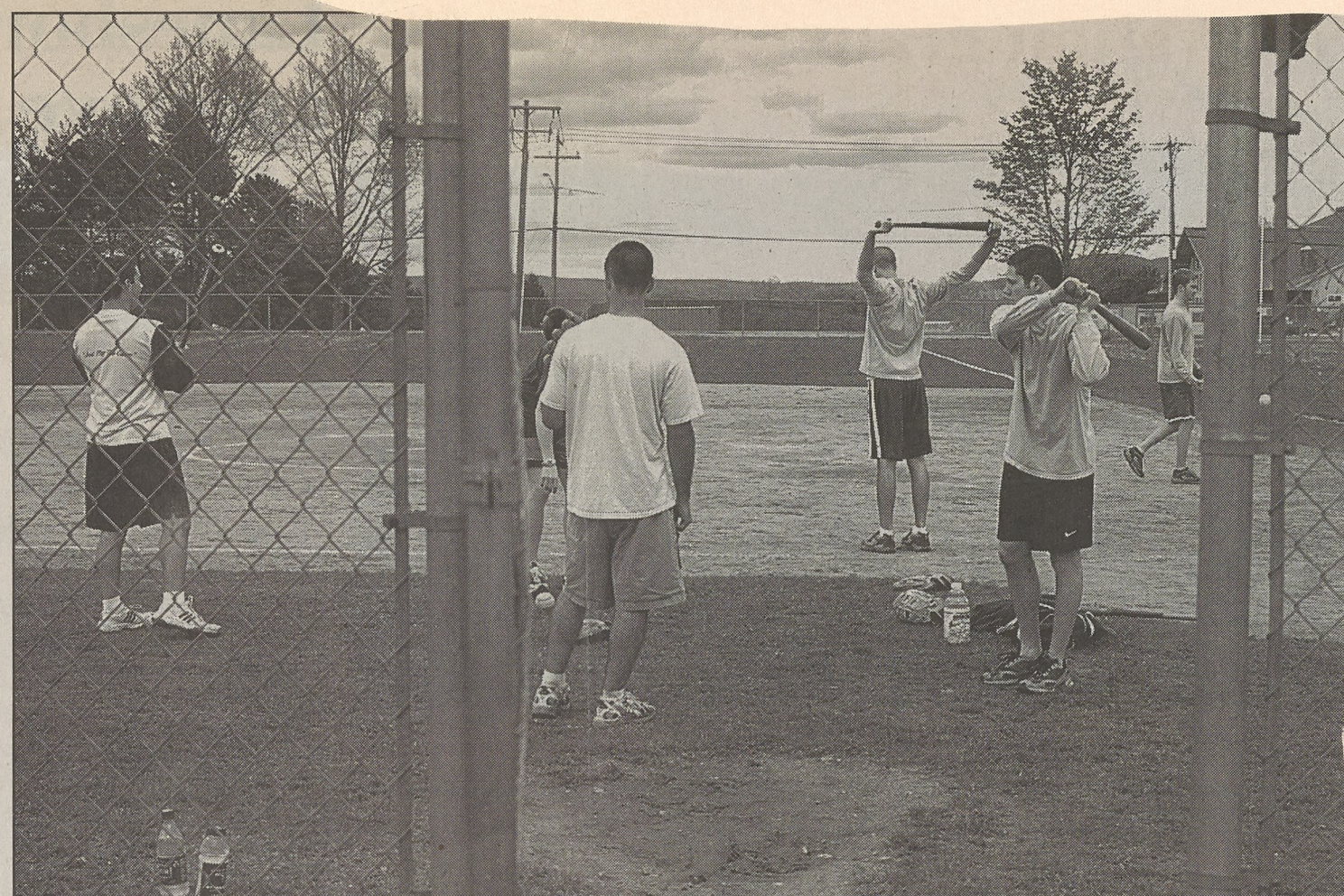
Kirvin, Deming, Clapp and Marchisio parks will all receive new playground equipment, as well.

The Parks Commission expects the work to be done over the next few years. It will try to schedule each phase of construction to cause the least amount of disturbance to the people and teams who rely on the parks for recreation.

Bossidy made his \$1 million donation to the city after he withdrew his plans to bring a minor league baseball here. When he made the gift, Bossidy, a former star athlete at Pittsfield High School, said he intended the money to be used to improve the city's playing fields. He has endorsed the \$550,000 in projects planned by the commission.

Of the remainder of the \$1 million, a portion was spent on equipment used in the upkeep of the fields, while \$100,000 has been set aside for maintenance and \$200,000 will be placed in an investment account and used to leverage grants or donations that require matching local funds.

Jack Dew can be reached at jdew@berkshireeagle.com.



A men's softball team called the Sullivan Litigators practices at the Gerald S. Doyle Memorial Softball Complex on Benedict Road in Pittsfield on Wednesday. Plans call for adding a third field to the facility.

Ben Garver / Berkshire Eagle Staff

The Pittsfield Gazette November 20, 2003

Park commission closes door on non-responsive Bears

By Laura Raskin

The park commission gave Jonathan Fleisig his walking papers on Monday.

The commission voted to request that Mayor Sara Hathaway officially sever ties and halt any negotiations with Berkshire Black Bears owner Jonathan Fleisig over the rental of Wahconah Park for the 2004 season.

Given Fleisig's failure to renew his license agreement or clarify his plans, commissioners favor that Babe Ruth baseball and other youth sports teams utilize the park in the 2004 season while Kirvin and Deming parks are renovated.

Fleisig's contract ended on October 31 without formal action. Widespread media reports have detailed negotiations to move his independent minor league team to Connecticut.

According to community services director James McGrath, Fleisig has told the city he will announce plans by November 26, the day he leaves for his honeymoon.

A majority of commissioners said that Wahconah Park shouldn't be held hostage while Fleisig makes other arrangements.

"I guess I'm not all that concerned about going out and looking for [another minor league team] because I love the idea that the Deming [and other] park renovation can get started earlier and not have to worry that we haven't got fields for [kids] to play on," said commissioner Gene Nadeau.

Using Wahconah for the duration of other park renovations could also eliminate the cost of making new and temporary parks during that time.

Nadeau initiated the motion to sever ties with Fleisig. Pittsfield has gone without professional baseball before, he said, and it will give the city a chance to "step back" and look for a good offer for the 2005 season.

The motion passed 3-2, despite McGrath's suggestion to wait until an update on Fleisig's plans had been learned from Hathaway.

"I think that would be damaging at this time," said McGrath, who suggested chairman Michael P. Filpi contact Hathaway for an update and convey the sentiments of the board first.

Commissioner Jane Bresnahan agreed.

"I think that since we don't know what conversations have gone on [between Mayor Hathaway and Fleisig] I personally am not willing to embarrass the Mayor or the city by going against a conversation that I don't know what was in it," she said.

Hathaway said Tuesday that she was aware of the passed motion and had not yet spoken with Fleisig.

"He's difficult to get a hold of," she said. "He did try to reach me today."

While opposing the commission's formal motion, McGrath said he understood the commission's frustration over the lack of negotiations and movement on Fleisig's part.

Nadeau believes Fleisig has been "stringing Pittsfield along and really he's leveraging Pittsfield against New Haven [where there have been media reports that Fleisig is moving the team] and vice versa. And I'd be willing to remove that leverage."

The commissioner added: "I don't have any confidence that the mayor at this time, at this late date, will be able to hammer out an agreement that will be satisfactory to me and get what I feel the park is worth."

Commissioner John Marchesi expressed disdain that his efforts to begin conversations with Fleisig in August about plans for the 2004 season went ignored by the commission, and that the prior park commission was left out of the contract agreement signed only by Fleisig and former Mayor Gerald Doyle, Jr. That agreement allowed Fleisig the late contract-ending date of October 31.

"We didn't do nothing about it and now this guy is keeping us hanging until November 26," said Marchesi. "I think we missed the boat."

Prior Wahconah tenants such as the Pittsfield Mets had contracts ending in August, said Marchesi, allowing enough time to search for new teams for the following season.

"We got handed a lot of stuff we had no control over and we're trying to fix it," said Filpi.

Mayor-elect James Ruberto on Tuesday supported the commission's vote.

"I do support the park commission vote," he said. "They're much closer to the situation than I am."

Ruberto said that it may be advisable to "look at the longterm of baseball in Pittsfield," even if it means a period without professional baseball.

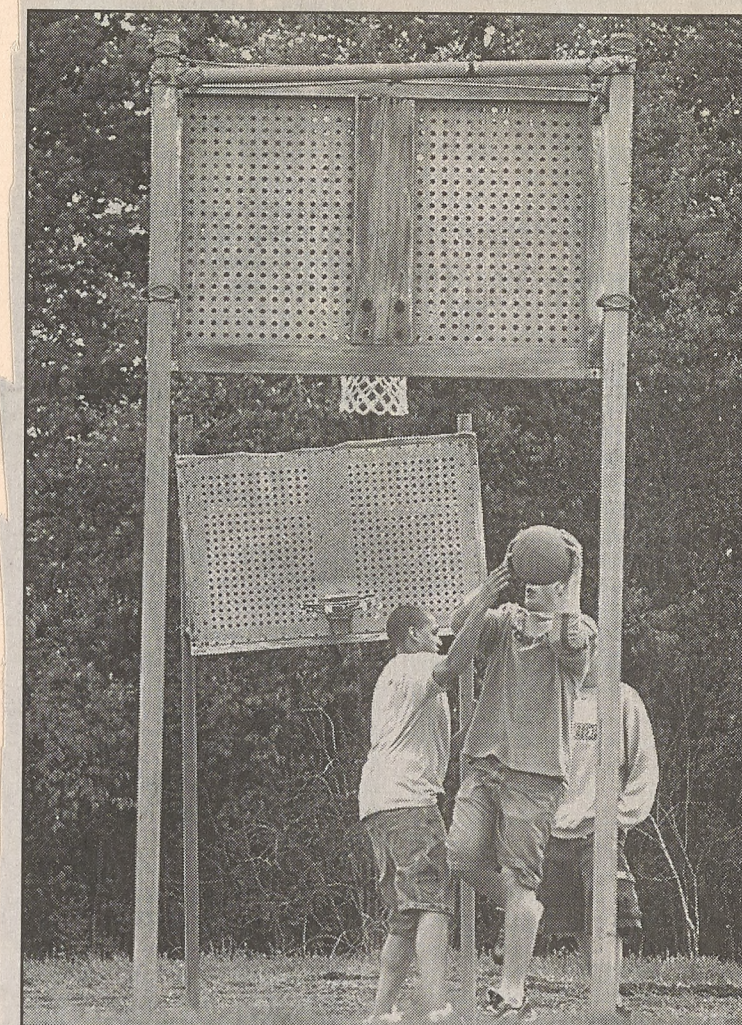
"We need to address it now and set the direction," he said.

The mayor-elect — having played Babe Ruth baseball at Wahconah Park when a teen — said he welcomes the idea of having youth teams play at Wahconah Park during renovations at other parks.

"It's an excellent opportunity and a way to get more activity in Wahconah Park," he said.

Friday, May 16, 2003

THE BOOKLOFT
In Great Barrington and at www.thebookloft.com



Ben Garver / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Conner Ferris, 18, Jon Martin, 17, and D.J. Wheeler, 17, play basketball at Kirvin Park in Pittsfield on a court that is slated for improvement with money donated by Lawrence Bossidy.

City Parks Dept. to set priorities for field projects

By Jack Dew
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — After winning belated approval from the City Council for a host of projects, the Parks Department will begin setting priorities for upgrades to Pittsfield's playing fields that it says are needed badly.

Its job will be complicated by the heavy use residents makes of the 24 city parks during the summer, and Director of Community Services James McGrath said the goal is to begin work in the late summer or early fall.

During Tuesday night's meeting, the City Council authorized the use of \$550,000 from a \$1 million donation made to Pittsfield by Lawrence A. Bossidy, the retired CEO of Honeywell Inc. Its 10-1 vote in favor of the project reversed a decision at its April 22 meeting, when the proposal failed on a tie, 5-5 vote. The loss drew criticism from Bossidy, who said he was frustrated at the city's inability to spend the money that he felt was urgently needed to better the playing fields.

Busiest time of year

McGrath said the Parks Department and the commission that oversees it will be talking over the

next few weeks of the best way to proceed with the work. "This is the busiest time of year for the Parks Department. We are short-staffed, we don't have a recreation director. There are a lot of things going on in the department, but certainly the Bossidy projects are important, and we are committed to getting them done and getting them done right."

Parks Commission Chairman Michael J. Filpi said he was relieved the projects had finally won council approval.

"I don't think voting it down sent a good message to anyone who was looking in and perhaps was wanting to donate money as Mr. Bossidy did," Filpi said. "Why would you want to donate money to the city when you have to go through this much aggravation to get it spent?"

The list of projects includes renovating a number of city fields, including the soccer field and basketball court at Kirvin Park, the baseball diamond at Deming Park, and the soccer field at Clapp Park.

The city also plans to build a third softball field at the Doyle Memorial Complex, and construct two new soccer and

PARKS, continued on B4

Park leaders seek progress, not politics

Advocates promote accessible park idea

The dream of a handicapped-accessible playground in Pittsfield this week took one step forward and one step backwards.

On Monday, the parks commission unanimously voted to designate a section of Springside Park for the proposed "boundless playground."

However the commission also removed \$50,000 in seed money, after being informed by parks benefactor Larry Bossidy that he feels the project should be government funded (see related story).

"This is needed and important," said community services Jim McGrath. "We really want to see this thing happen."

A coalition of social agencies — including the Berkshire County Association for Retarded Citizens, United Cerebral Palsy and AdLib — is advocating for the project.

The initiative also has strong support from officials including parks commission chairman Mike Filpi, city council president Rick Scapin and Mayor Sara Hathaway.

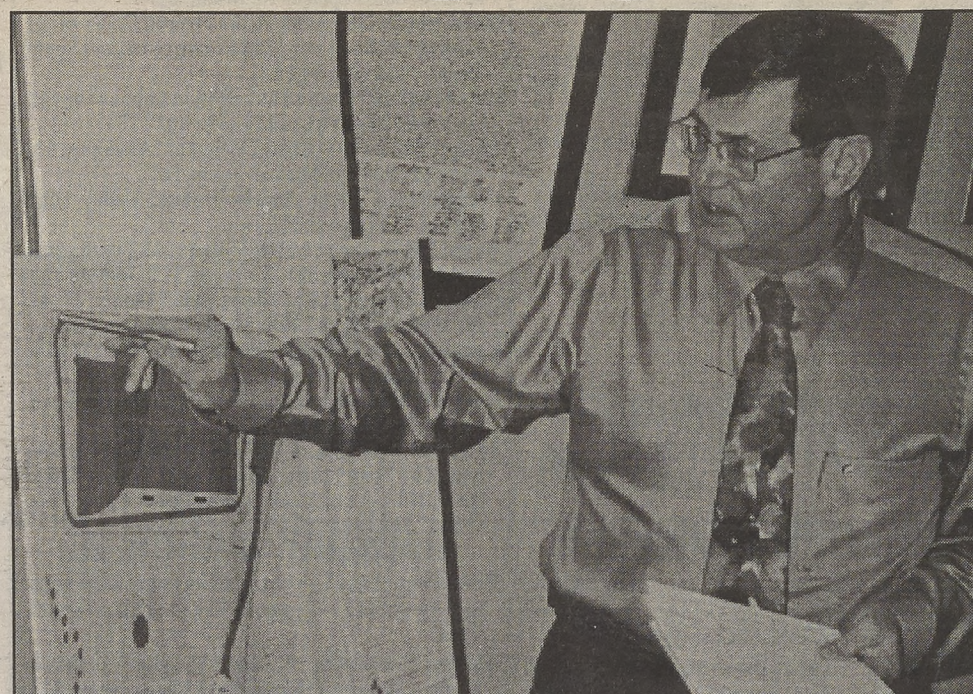
"It will be a wonderful resource for families and will also be a regional attraction to bring people to the city," said Hathaway.

But funding construction — estimated at \$150,000 to \$250,000 — plus ongoing maintenance, will be a challenge.

Ken Singer, executive director of BCARC, says KB Toys has already pledged \$5,000 to support the initiative.

"It does have a lot of community support," he said. "There have been no negatives at all as

See ACCESSIBLE page 7



Tom Hickey outlines plans for the Mark Belanger Memorial Sports Facility on Monday. The Pittsfield Economic Development Authority will construct the facility, which will include a field for baseball/softball and soccer/lacrosse, encircled by a quarter-mile walking track.

Plans advance for Belanger youth facility

Construction should begin this spring on the Mark Belanger Memorial Sports Facility for an opening in 2004.

The \$600,000 complex off East and Newell streets is being constructed by the Pittsfield Economic Development Authority on former General Electric property.

"I see this as being a very successful addition to the community," PEDA executive director Tom Hickey said on Monday.

Hickey hosted a sparsely attended public hearing Monday to update progress on the project. A public input period will conclude next week.

See PEDa page 11

Spending plan for Bossidy gift updated

With a little extra guidance from the donor, the parks commission on Monday finalized a general proposal to spend \$550,000 from funds donated by Larry Bossidy.

Mayor Sara Hathaway on Wednesday endorsed the plan and forwarded it to the city council.

Commissioners had tentatively supported a concept last month, but wrote to Bossidy to ensure their plan met the spirit of his donation.

In 2001, Bossidy donated \$1 million to boost city parks. About \$150,000 was spent that year to purchase maintenance vehicles and equipment. The remaining funds are in an interest-bearing account.

Based on a March 7 letter from Bossidy, the commission this week modified their concept — striking monies for a new handicapped accessible playground (see related story).

Bossidy stressed his support for physically challenged children but said "funds for construction of an all-access playground should be provided by either the city or state."

In general, Bossidy endorsed the commission's approach: "You are correct in assuming that the main intent of my donation was to improve & preserve the city's playing fields," he wrote. "Hence, I'm delighted to learn that several parks will be the recipient of much-needed upgrades."

The other sticking point for some commissioners involved whether it is appropriate to

See BOSSIDY page 7

PEDA park plans advance

continued from page 1

The 3-1/4 acre facility — to be maintained by PEDa for three years and then turned over to the city — will include fields that for youth baseball or softball and for youth soccer or lacrosse.

Surrounding the fields will be a quarter-mile walking track.

The entire facility will be illuminated by seven 70-foot light poles, with separate lights for game use and track use.

"It will be for all the different [youth] leagues," said Hickey, "so they can get used to playing under lights."

Hickey said that youth teams from Pittsfield competing in tournaments have been at a disadvantage because they're not accustomed to night games.

"It is very confusing the first time you play under artificial lights," he said.

The 12-foot wide walking track should prove popular with adults, particularly since PEDa has decided to install a more expensive rubber-style surface.

"We think it will get a lot more use if we have it on there rather than gravel," said Hickey.

The facility will also include portable bleachers, restrooms, a sprinkler/irrigation system and a portable concession trailer.

Provisions of the PCB consent decree that governs PEDa operations prohibit permanent food operations.

Hickey stressed that the property — which GE will lease to the city for 99 years at a cost of \$1 — is free of contamination.

"I'm satisfied, the EPA is satisfied — this is going to be a youth facility so we've made sure," he said.

Visible amenity

Hickey views the sports complex as an visible indicator of the city's recovery from the tarnish of contamination.

"It's going to look nice, it will give the city a good image," he said.

The PEDa executive director also stated that the facility will be a "valuable amenity" as his organization looks to attract new companies to the area.

"This goes right along with the change of the whole south side of East Street from an old industrial site," he said.

Community services director Jim McGrath said the parks department will work with PEDa to schedule use of the fields and develop a long-term plan to operate and maintain the complex.

"We're going to work on this together," he said.

Parks commissioner John Marchesi welcomes the addition of new state-of-the-art fields.

"That soccer field is badly needed," he said.

The facility is being named in memory of former Major League Baseball shortstop Mark Belanger, a local athlete renowned for his defensive prowess.

Handelman said the Black Bears are not the only Northeast League team his group would approach to see if it was interested in moving to New Haven.

Black Bears among teams eyed by New Haven group

By Tony Dobrowolski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The leader of a group trying to place a Northeast League baseball team in New Haven, Conn., next year said yesterday that Berkshire Black Bears principal owner Jonathan Fleisig has not been involved in the negotiations.

"I'm not negotiating on his behalf," said investment adviser Rick Handelman of Scarsdale, N.Y., who heads the group representing the league in the New Haven negotiations, in a telephone interview yesterday.

The New Haven (Conn.) Register has reported that the Black Bears will move to New Haven as soon as Handelman's group can reach agreement on a lease to use 6,200-seat Yale Field next year.

Although The Register reported Sunday that the Black Bears' move to New Haven "looks to be airtight," Handelman said he won't ask Fleisig — or the owner of any other Northeast League team — whether they are interested in moving their franchises to New Haven until his group obtains the lease.

Lease negotiations are still continuing, Handelman said.

"A draft lease has been sent to my attorney, and he sent it back to them," Handelman said. "We're in a holding pattern right now."

Handelman said he had hoped the lease negotiations would be wrapped up by yesterday.

11/22/03
BEARS, continued on B5

Bears among teams eyed by New Haven

BEARS from B1

The negotiations were originally held up because Handelman's attorney had to attend to a family matter in St. Louis, he said. Negotiations have been suspended through this weekend because of the Yale-Harvard football game today in New Haven.

"Everything goes on hold" because of the Yale-Harvard game, Handelman said. "We won't go back [to negotiating] until early next week."

Fleisig has said he has not spoken with anyone about moving the Black Bears to New Haven next year, and would like to speak with officials in Pittsfield before he makes a final decision. He has said he hopes to have the Black Bears' situation wrapped up by Wednesday, when he leaves on his honeymoon.

Handelman, a part-owner of the

Northeast League's Brockton Rox, said he spoke with Fleisig after reading reports in The Eagle about the Black Bears' status in Pittsfield.

Handelman said Fleisig also indicated to him that he wants to speak with Pittsfield officials before deciding his team's fate.

"He's very loyal to [Mayor] Sara Hathaway," Handelman said. "He's talked very highly of her, and he wants to do the right thing by her."

If Fleisig did agree to move the Black Bears to New Haven, Handelman said he would ask him to remain as part of the ownership group.

"Whoever I go to, I kind of hope they stay on as an owner," Handelman said.

Handelman said the Black Bears are not the only Northeast League team his group would approach to see if it was interested in moving

to New Haven. But he declined to say what other league teams he might contact.

It is believed the Northeast League would consider letting the Allentown (Pa.) Ambassadors move to another city. The Ambassadors, who had the second-worst attendance behind the Black Bears in the Northeast League this year, were interested in moving into a new stadium in Danbury, Conn., for the 2004 season. But Northeast League Commissioner Miles Wolff said that deal fell through because the Danbury stadium won't be ready until at least 2005.

Hathaway said she has spoken by telephone with Fleisig since the Black Bears' season ended Labor Day weekend, but that negotiations on the team's future in Pittsfield have not taken place. The Black Bears' two-year licensing agreement with the city to use

Wahconah Park expired Oct. 31.

Fleisig has never told Hathaway that the Black Bears would definitely leave Pittsfield. But according to the mayor, Fleisig has told her that he was giving "strong consideration" to alternate locations for the team, mainly because of the lack of advertising revenue available in Pittsfield.

Despite the lack of any substantive negotiations between the Black Bears and the city since the season ended Labor Day weekend, Fleisig said earlier this week that he was stunned when the Pittsfield Parks Commission voted to urge Hathaway to break off negotiations with him. He believes officials have unfairly characterized the status of his team.

The Parks Commission voted to ask Hathaway to sever ties with Fleisig in part because some of its members felt Fleisig was using Pittsfield as leverage to get a better deal in another city.

Bouton offers his version

continued from page 1

civic authority and new stadium, to be built partially on property owned by the media company.

On February 7, 2001 — with the long-delayed civic authority election four months away — Elitzer and Bouton pitched their Wahconah Plan to the leaders of Berkshire Sports including attorney Gerry Denmark, Eagle publisher Andy Mick and former community development director Tom Murphy.

Following the meeting, the Berkshire Sports team — and the Berkshire Eagle — continued to deny the existence of alternatives to a new stadium: "In the days that followed there was no discernible difference in the reporting, the columns or the editorials of The Berkshire Eagle."

From a subsequent luncheon, Bouton quotes Mick stating that the group's alternative — renovating Wahconah Park — wouldn't be acknowledged by pro-civic authority forces: "We're not going to make it public."

With the June defeat of the civic authority — and the Eagle's subsequent condemnations of voters — Bouton and Elitzer saw a chance to revisit their plan.

"This was also exciting. And very odd. Here we were, back in the game, as the result of a Herculean effort from total strangers who had no idea what was around the corner," he writes.

Elitzer lobbied Mick to now support their plan. Bouton says that Mick explained, "it's not my decision... the guy you have to convince is my boss in Denver."

The "Foul Ball" introduction concludes: "A historic ballpark soon to be abandoned, a government that ignores its citizens, a newspaper at war with its readers, the curious involvement of General Electric, and the shots are being called by a guy in Denver? It was about this time that I began taking notes."

The bulk of the book recounts — day by day — Bouton's campaign to win over skeptical city officials and his group's many brushes with the Eagle. Numerous Eagle editorials and stories are quoted — as well as other media accounts.

On a lively description recalls a June 18 meeting with former Mayor Gerald Doyle, Jr. and Murphy, during which Doyle whips out a cigarette, swears into a phone and offers to fix parking tickets. Doyle is described as exuding "a regular-guy affability and unjustly accused fury, creating the overall impression of a pugnacious maitre d'."

On June 19, Bouton reports that "the Berkshire Eagle continues to promulgate its own sad view of the world... You would think that the Berkshire Eagle — with a financial stake in the outcome of a new stadium versus Wahconah Park — would bend over backward to at least give the appearance of fairness."

Over the course of the book few at the Eagle receive flattering portrayals. For purposes of the book, editorial page editor Bill Everhart and editor David Scribner are eventually merged into a single unfriendly naysaying creature, the "Ever-Scrib."

When the Eagle publishes a July 8 story by Bill Carey that Bouton deems fair, he muses, "I wonder how much longer Carey will be working at the

Eagle."

The Eagle is not the only target of Bouton's pen in "Foul Ball." He also aims with gusto at an array of city officials with whom he sparred including former parks commission chairman Cliff Nilan and an array of current and former city councilors.

The story continues with awkward meetings before the parks commission, the short-lived reemergence of Larry Bossidy with a possible team and the south county group's showdown with Doyle-favorite Jonathan Fleisig.

The Bouton group provided sketches of planned renovations to Wahconah Park and tried to sell officials on a plan for a long-term occupancy at Wahconah Park.

Along the way, they encountered skepticism because they didn't currently own an available baseball team and because of their physical and business plans.

Of a planned phone-in vote following a televised meeting to let residents show support for their favorite baseball concepts, Bouton laments "the Eagle buried it in the Community Notes section as if it were a store opening or a Kiwanis meeting."

While unable to get the Eagle to report in depth about their phone poll — which drew more than 5,000 votes — Bouton said on August 24 the daily newspaper showed "the proper way to conduct a preference poll: Send [a reporter] to a Big Y supermarket and have him interview six people."

The book continues into the fall elections and the parks commission's ultimate decision to have Fleisig bring his then-inactive minor league baseball team to Wahconah for 2002 and 2003, sending Bouton & Co. back to the locker room.

In a brief appendix titled "Smoking Gun," Bouton alleges that contamination at the "new" stadium site — corner of West and Center streets — is worse than was publicly reported.

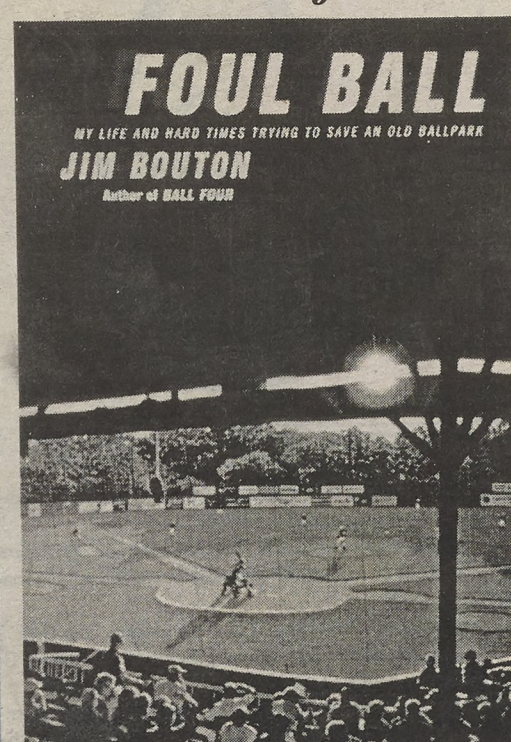
He cites a state environmental protection "release notification form," warning of pollution at the site, which the Eagle or its representatives received in January 2001. According to Bouton, "had the vote been in favor of a civic authority, the liability of a cleanup would have passed through the civic authority and, ultimately, to the citizens of Pittsfield."

Bouton's conclusions about Pittsfield politics are harsh: "It's hard to keep track of which politicians are beholden to whom. This is democracy in action, advice and consent, Pittsfield style: The power structure advises the council what it wants to see happen and asks them to play or else. Once the council consents, which can take all of fifteen minutes, the matter goes to the lower chamber — DelGallo's or The Brewery — for enactment by people like the mayor and his commissioners."

Later he adds: "The sad fact is that in Pittsfield, it doesn't really matter who holds office at any given time. The shots are called by Berkshire Bank, the Eagle, Cain Hibbard and General Electric. Whether it's a plan to restore Wahconah Park or a campaign to clean up the Housatonic River, if the Gang of Four doesn't want it, it's not going to happen. No matter what the people want. And no matter who they elect."

Bouton spins his Wahconah tale

Book about failed baseball bid lacerates Pittsfield politics and Eagle agenda



"Ball Four" author Jim Bouton comes out swinging in his upcoming book about his Pittsfield experiences.

The game is fixed in Pittsfield, declares Jim Bouton.

The former professional baseball player tosses serious fastballs — some may describe them as beanballs — in his soon-to-be-published book, "Foul Ball."

Subtitled "My Life and Hard Times Trying to Save an Old Ballpark," the book is a diary of Bouton's unsuccessful attempts — with two partners — to bring a minor league baseball team to Pittsfield in 2001.

Following a dispute with his publisher, Public Affairs, Bouton now plans to self-publish "Foul Ball" through his Bulldog Publishing imprint.

Bulldog already publishes "Ball Four: The Final Pitch," the updated version of Bouton's famed account of his 1969 baseball season.

Advance, uncorrected copies of "Foul Ball" sent this past week to select national media reveal a blunt book that offers one person's view of a crazed power establishment in Pittsfield.

Bouton takes swipes at the officials, business leaders and others — particularly The Berkshire Eagle — who he felt threw curveballs at him as he campaigned to field a team at Wahconah Park.

The book has already drawn flak from the Eagle, but Bouton is unfazed.

"I put this book up against the Eagle's version of the same events," the author stated.

Bouton acknowledged that his descriptions of Pittsfield insiders and recreations of embarrassing (and often confidential) conversations will ruffle feathers.

"I have notes of every single conversation," he said, adding that he feels his "contemporaneous notes" accurately depict the events.

The book — set to hit stores in June — is already attracting attention. The New York Times on April 10 devoted three-quarters of one page to Bouton and his project.

The uncorrected version of the book distributed to media is 354 pages. Minor changes — and the addition of an author's note — will take place before the consumer copy is printed.

"Foul Ball" opens with a brief discussion of the politics of publicly funded new stadiums for professional sports leagues and sequesters into Bouton's affection for Wahconah Park, which he lauds for its "own sublime balance."

"Every time I would read or hear something about the plight of Wahconah Park, I'd feel a little tug of sadness," writes Bouton. "How could they abandon a landmark that means so much to the city?"

The author comments on Bill Gladstone's plans to move the Pittsfield Mets/Astros to a new publicly funded stadium in New York state and the subsequent proposal to build a new stadium and create a quasi-governmental civic authority in Pittsfield.

Bouton teamed up with fellow south county resident Chip Elitzer and minor-league sports team owner Eric Margenau to begin a quest to offer an alternative to closing Wahconah.

Bouton notes that The Berkshire Eagle — one of the partners of Berkshire Sports & Events — campaigned mightily for the

See BOUTON page 15

Mayor: Black Bears likely to go

By Tony Dobrowolski

Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — If Jonathan Fleisig is serious about bringing the Berkshire Black Bears back to Pittsfield next year, it appears Mayor Sara Hathaway doesn't know about it.

Responding to the Parks Commission's recommendation to break off negotiations with the baseball team owner, Hathaway yesterday said she hasn't been negotiating with Fleisig at all but conceded that the Northeast League team is leaving town following two years at Wahconah Park.

"I think that they wanted me to

stop negotiating," Hathaway said of the commission's decision, made earlier this week. "I'm not even sure the language is relevant because there really hasn't been a negotiation under way."

"I don't see a likely continuation of Mr. Fleisig's team in Pittsfield, so I think the whole thing is moot," she said. "If it changes, I'll let the Parks Commission know, but that's where it stands now."

On Wednesday, Fleisig sounded astonished that the Park Commission had voted, 3-2, to urge breaking off negotiations with him.

Parks Commission Chairman Michael Filpi said the three commissioners who voted in favor were

concerned that the Black Bears' owner had let the two-year licensing agreement to use Wahconah Park expire, that it appeared the Black Bears would be leaving Pittsfield anyway, and that Fleisig was using Pittsfield as leverage to gain a better deal for his team in another city. The Parks Commission maintains 4,000-seat Wahconah Park.

The New Haven (Conn.) Register has published several reports stating that the Black Bears will leave Pittsfield for New Haven once a group representing the Northeast League can obtain a lease to use 6,200-seat Yale Field. A report in

MAJOR continued on B4

Mayor looking at city's baseball options

MAYOR from B1

The Register on Sunday described the move as "airtight."

Fleisig has said that he has not spoken to anyone in New Haven about moving there, and that he believed the Parks Commission has unfairly characterized the status of his team.

The Black Bears cleaned out their offices in Pittsfield when the lease expired on Oct. 31. General Manager Michael Kardimas and Manager Darren Bush have left the club since the season ended. On Monday, Bush was named manager of the Northeast League's Quebec Les Capitales.

Hathaway said yesterday she has not had an in-depth discussion with Fleisig since August, when he met with city officials in Pittsfield to discuss the status of the team. Filpi also attended that meeting.

At that meeting, Hathaway said, Fleisig indicated that he had not received the amount of advertising revenue in Pittsfield that he had hoped for in order to keep the Black Bears at Wahconah Park.

Since then, Hathaway said most of her discussions with Fleisig have been telephone conversations in which he has updated her on his plans for the team.

Hathaway denied the Parks Commission's contention that Fleisig has been using Pittsfield as leverage while he looks for a better deal from another city.

Straightforward talks

Before the city election earlier this month, Hathaway said Fleisig had already informed her he would be looking at other locations for the Black Bears because of the lack of revenue available in Pittsfield.

The Black Bears averaged fewer than 1,000 fans per game last season, the lowest average among the Northeast League's eight teams.

"I don't think he wants to foreclose all of his options because I don't believe he has a final offer from New Haven or any other city," Hathaway said. "Nothing is final yet."

"He's been very straightforward with me about the need for more revenues and a business opportunity for his investment," Hathaway said. "There's been nothing underhanded about the way he's dealt with me."

"He didn't want to slam the door because he sees some value in our relationship. But he is exploring other options and there hasn't been anything underhanded about it."

"He has also always pledged

that if he didn't come back to Pittsfield, he would help us find an alternative team," the mayor added.

Fleisig on Wednesday said he has been in "constant contact" with Hathaway since the Black Bears season ended Labor Day weekend, but later said he had only spoken with the mayor a "handful" of times.

Fleisig also said he has exchanged voice-mails with Mayor-elect James M. Ruberto and was looking forward to speaking with him. Ruberto did not return a telephone call yesterday seeking comment.

Hathaway said she has spoken with representatives of other baseball teams about playing in Pittsfield next year, but declined to identify them. "I'd rather not say yet," Hathaway said.

Representatives of the New England Collegiate Baseball League, which has a franchise in North Adams; the Northeast League and the Atlantic League have expressed varying degrees of interest in placing a team in Wahconah Park.

"My bottom line is, I do not want to have a season without baseball in Wahconah Park," Hathaway said.

Tony Dobrowolski can be reached at tdobrowolski@berkshireeagle.com.

Accessible playground project now has home, but needs funds

continued from page 1

we have described it to civic groups ... It's such an exciting project."

The "boundless playground" concept incorporates designs and construction materials that allow wheelchair-bound children to enjoy traditional play activities.

Interaction encouraged

Advocates stress the playground would be for all children, not just the physically challenged.

"This playground would be for everybody," said Singer.

McGrath says that the playground would resemble a traditional municipal park area but with wider spaces between apparatus and surfaces that allow wheelchair use.

"With ramps and other elements, it will be a more sprawling structure, but well-designed," he said.

Maneera Murphy, who works with children in wheelchairs both as a parent and leader of the "Winners on Wheels" program, says that allowing wheelchair-bound kids to share

activities with non-challenged children is an important benefit.

"This will be a place where they can be on equal footing, where they can play together," she said. "It's a playground these kids can go to and play with their friends, to be together rather than on the side watching."

After visiting a "boundless playground" in East Hartford, Murphy began dreaming about seeing one in Pittsfield.

"It's great because it's accessible," she said. "It's all matted, the swings have high backs and harnesses and the surface is something a wheelchair can go over... It's for everyone."

McGrath thinks the designated Springside Park location — off Springside Avenue by the North Little League field — is ideal.

The site is in proximity to other activities, has nearby parking, requires minimal fill and the potential to piggyback a restroom with a Little League structure.

"It also makes sense to concentrate

activities at Springside Park," he said.

Other possible locations — such as Kirvin Park and the Common — were rejected, in part due to access problems.

McGrath isn't sure how the project will be funded. "A significant fundraising effort will have to get underway," he said.

The community services director said fundraising and grant solicitation must be launched.

Hathaway, while supporting the initiative, said the city is not positioned to provide funding.

"We don't have that kind of money," she said. "I am looking at possibilities in our [federal] block grant funds, but we don't have \$50,000 we can spare."

Once the playground is built, the agencies, notably BCARC, will serve as long-term advocates.

"This will be a city playground, but BCARC will be the stewards," McGrath said.

Bossidy project list sent to City Hall

continued from page 1

use some of the monies for playground equipment.

"It is important to inform you that I support this proposal," Bossidy wrote. However he requested that no more than 25 percent of any one year's disbursement be used for playground equipment.

The current overall plan — as drafted by community services director Jim McGrath — sets aside \$200,000 for investment and "future project leveraging" plus \$100,000 for a maintenance account to fund upkeep of fields.

Priorities

The remaining \$550,000 would be allocated to:

- redo the soccer fields and basketball court plus to install a new playground structure at Kirvin Park
- redo the baseball field and install new playground pieces at Deming Park
- complete the third softball field at the Doyle Memorial complex and redo the Babe Ruth field
- build two new fields and to subsidize a handicapped-accessible restroom at Springside Park
- install new playground pieces at Coolidge Park / Conte School
- redo the soccer fields, install safety fences and add a playground structure at Clapp Park
- install new playground pieces at Marchisio Park.

McGrath's \$550,000 tentative budget allocates \$100,000 for contingency if estimates for any components are insufficient.

Lingering questions

While commissioners endorsed the general plan, they plan to further investigate two proposed expenditures: the Springside restroom and the Coolidge Park equipment.

The restroom was originally part of an allocation to the North Little League to finish construction of a concession stand at Springside Park.

"I still have a problem with that, it's \$10,000 I don't think is covered in the letter," said commissioner Gene Nadeau.

Parks maintenance foreman Tony Stracuzzi said Springside desperately needs restroom facilities. "It's a heavily used park," he said. "There's nature trails, ball fields, basketball and there's no bathroom there."

McGrath said "a bathroom for Springside is really needed."

Nadeau remained unconvinced: "What we're doing there is to use the Bossidy money to bail out the city."

Commissioners Eleanor Persip and Jane Bresnahan want to review the Coolidge improvements.

"I grew up in that park but I didn't know it was in existence anymore," said Persip. "If it's [still] an established park and you're replacing the equipment, fine ... otherwise I don't think Larry would go for it, the money was directed to the parks, not the school department."

A key question is whether the playground equipment will be placed on park property or school property — and who will maintain it.

"I think it can be handled quite easily," said McGrath, saying parks and school personnel can draft a written agreement.

No more delays

Chairman Mike Filpi said it's vital that the process begin to free up money so the parks can begin reaping the benefits from the donation.

"It's going on two years that nothing's been done," he said.

Bresnahan hopes that the city council doesn't try to micromanage the

commission's plan, which has been the subject of numerous meetings and a December public input hearing.

"We need to send it to the city council very strongly," she said. "This is the board that investigated the parks, that visited the parks, that worked with the authorities on the parks such as Mr. Stracuzzi."

Filpi said councilors are aware of the commission's efforts. "I don't think we're going to have 11 people trying to pick and choose [projects]," he said.

Nadeau said the key thing is to see the money used as intended by Bossidy.

"I'd like to have some fields we can be proud of," he said. "Take care of those first and see where we stand after that."

Mayoral support

While some city councilors have voiced other ideas for the Bossidy fund (see related story on page 3), Mayor Hathaway supports the commission's recommendations.

"They made some good choices for the community," the mayor said. "I feel the parks commission sought community input, considered a range of alternatives and communicated with the donor."

Like all municipal appropriations, allocations from the Bossidy fund are subject to review by the city's state-controlled finance oversight board.

Fleisig dismayed by parks board vote

By Tony Dobrowolski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Berkshire Black Bears principal owner Jonathan Fleisig said yesterday he was stunned that the Parks Commission on Monday night voted to urge the city to "break off negotiations" on the Northeast League baseball team's possible return to Wahconah Park next season.

"You just knocked the wind out of me," Fleisig said from his office in New York City after being informed of the Parks Commission's 3-2 vote.

'The general feeling is [the Black Bears are] not coming back anyway.'

Parks Commission Chairman Michael Filpi was one of the two dissenters. But he said yesterday he believed the three commissioners who voted yes did so for three reasons: The deadline for the Black Bears to renew their two-year licensing agreement to use Wahconah Park expired Oct. 31; the team appears to be on the verge of leaving Pittsfield; and Fleisig appears to be using Pittsfield as leverage in negotiations with other cities.

A New Haven, Conn., newspaper continues to report that the Black Bears will move there next year once a group representing the Northeast League can reach terms on a lease to use 6,200-seat Yale Field.

The New Haven Register reported Sunday that "the move of the Berkshire Black Bears of the Northeast League [to New Haven] looks to be airtight."

Parks Commissioner Eugene Nadeau, who made the motion to ask Mayor Sara Hathaway to sever ties with Fleisig, said he believed Fleisig was "stringing the city along" in negotiations, and that he was frustrated with how the negotiations were proceeding.

"I can't speak for the other commissioners," Nadeau said. "But the general feeling is that he's not coming back anyway. I don't want the city being used as leverage for someone to get a better deal. Just take us out of the loop."

Nadeau said if professional baseball is not going to be played at Wahconah Park next season, the Parks Commission is interested in having Babe Ruth League teams use Wahconah so that it can use funding from the \$1 million donation by Lawrence A. Bossidy to fix up Deming Field as soon as possible.

Commissioners John Marchese and Eleanor Persip also voted to urge Hathaway to break off negotiations with Fleisig. Eleanor Bresnahan and Filpi cast the dissenting votes.

Hathaway was out of the office yesterday afternoon and could not

BEARS, continued on A6

11/20/03

Fleisig dismayed by parks board vote

BEARS from A1

be reached for comment.

Fleisig said yesterday he has been in "constant contact" with Hathaway since the Black Bears' season ended Labor Day weekend, including several times through e-mails. But Fleisig said he had only spoken with the mayor "a handful" of times, including yesterday morning.

Asked specifically what they have discussed, Fleisig said that was between the mayor and him. "But it's about keeping baseball at Wahconah Park."

Fleisig said he has also exchanged voice-mails with Mayor-elect James M. Ruberto, who takes office in January. "I'm looking forward to speaking with him," Fleisig said.

Asked to assess the Black Bears' chances of returning to Pittsfield, Fleisig said, "It's tough to say."

"I've got four people in my office and 15 things on my desk. We're working on all sorts of stuff. I'm being vague for a reason."

Regarding the perception

among Parks Commissioners that the Black Bears are simply using Pittsfield for leverage in negotiations with New Haven, Fleisig said:

"No, I don't think it's fair. I think it's appalling. Why doesn't someone besides the mayor or you pick up the phone and talk to me?"

Fleisig said last week that he has not spoken with anyone about moving the Black Bears to New Haven next year, and that he wanted to speak with officials in Pittsfield before making a decision. Fleisig said he planned to make a decision before leaving on his honeymoon Nov. 26, the day before Thanksgiving.

Nadeau said he didn't believe it was the Parks Commission's role to contact Fleisig because Hathaway has been handling the negotiations.

"We certainly would not be willing to intrude on Mayor Hathaway's role in this," Nadeau said.

According to The Register, a group led by New York invest-

ment adviser Rick Handelman is negotiating a lease to use Yale Field next year on the Northeast League's behalf.

Both Northeast League Commissioner Miles Wolff and Walter Esdaile, New Haven's director of business development, have said that if Handelman's group can obtain a lease to use Yale Field, it would then have to see which teams the Northeast League would make available to move there.

The Black Bears would fit into that category, according to Wolff, because the team's lease is up and the team averaged fewer than 1,000 fans per game last season, the lowest total in the eight-team league.

The Register also reported Fleisig would remain with the team as an owner after the move to New Haven. But Fleisig has denied that report, saying he has never spoken to anyone from The Register.

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Wind lesson

First grade students from Sacred Heart Middle School visited Deming Park on Friday to test "wind instruments" they created as part of a weather curriculum. The students' devices — paper plates, string and streamers — captured the breeze, fueling smiles and giggles.

Vendors pitch playground options for Bossidy Buck expenditures

By Rob Schulze

Park commissioners on Monday night heard presentations from two playground equipment vendors hoping to refurbish four city parks.

The parks are slated to receive new equipment as part of the commission's plan to spend Larry Bossidy's \$1 million donation for improving the city's parks. Clapp, Deming, Marchiso and Kirvin parks are slated to receive new playground pieces.

The first vendor, Maturano Recreation Company, represents GameTime playground equipment. The second, Andy O'Brien and Sons, represents Landscape Structures playground equipment.

While both companies offered to build jungle gyms and slides that look very similar to the average eye, the vendors outlined the unique aspects of their equipment.

GameTime's components — the demonstration was a vertical post and a horizontal bar — were fastened by an internal bolt, which they said prevented slippage on the posts to which simple round collars can fall prey. Landscape Structures used what a representative called a 360-degree compression clamp, or a round collar that is bolted externally on two ends so that it touches the bar at all points for the same demonstration.

GameTime's deck — or the flooring of the playground equipment — was 11 gauge thickness steel over-

laid with polyvinyl, which they called the heaviest in the industry. Their holes could be bigger, to allow for more debris to fall through, or smaller for improved handicapped access. Landscape Design's deck was 12 gauge PVC-coated steel with small punched holes.

Maturano offers free installation — excluding prior site work — as part of a contract through the state. O'Brien and Sons does not offer free installation, but does cap the installation expenses at 25 percent of the equipment cost. They also do not do site preparation.

Jim McGrath, the city's community services director, said that such work could be done in house.

"Parks department can do all the upfront work," he said.

GameTime equipment is installed at Russell Field in North Adams, Lanesboro Pre-school and elementary school and many other locations in Western Massachusetts. A new setup at Lee elementary is being installed this Saturday, vendor Doug Knotts said, if anyone wishes to see how the process works. Landscape Designs' equipment can be found in Pittsfield at Burbank Park.

Knotts bragged about GameTime being the biggest national brand; O'Brien and Sons' representative said that they are a small, family-owned business distributing what they feel is the best product in the nation.

O'Brien and Sons presented two

plans for the board to consider; under one they would partner with other consultants to do all of the parks' improvements, including work on non-playground items like fields, and under the other they would simply be a vendor and provide the equipment.

Both vendors offered to hold public community meetings to help design the playground; both had technology where a schematic could be done on computer and altered on command during the meeting, with an assessment of the cost.

Board chairman Michael Filpi explained to both vendors that, because of the way the Bossidy money is set up, the projects could not be paid for all at once. Only a certain amount of the donation money can be spent on playground replacement each year. He said that whichever vendor is chosen would have to agree to build the playgrounds over a period of years after the contracts are signed and not have the price increase. Both vendors agreed that they could work something out.

The board did not discuss which vendor members preferred, although commissioner John Marchesi spoke glowingly of O'Brien and Sons' work for the city in the past. No vote was taken.

McGrath said that he would like whichever vendor is chosen to hold a public meeting this winter and begin construction within the year.

Bossidy Bucks should restore pleasures of simple fields

Planet Valenti

by DAN VALENTI

News item: "Council rejects park projects. Proposal for spending \$550,000 of Bossidy gift fails on tie vote."

Let me take the long road to discussing this. When I finally get there,

42 years later, I'll give you the Reader's Digest version. But first I want to meander for the sheer fun of it. That's what you do in the park. Have fun.

On April 11, 1961, I played in a game of pickup baseball at the "low field" at Deming Park. The low field is the diamond you immediately encounter if you enter the park through the gate off Newell Street directly opposite Lyman. How do I know I was on the low field that particular day so long ago? Did something monumental happen? No. It was just a bunch of the guys playing pickup. But it was Opening Day for the Red Sox at Fenway Park, and some kid had Curt Gowdy on the radio calling play-by-play.

It's funny how certain routine moments imprint themselves in your brain. We all remember the big stuff like graduations and weddings, but isn't the mind amazing that will keep an ordinary moment from an ordinary day so sharp 42 years later? Even now, when I walk the low field at Deming, I think of that day playing ball with the guys.

I never learned the derivation of the term "low field." My guess is because it was in rough shape: sand dunes instead of infield dirt, a Swiss cheese backstop that didn't stop much, no mound, no bases, no plate, no foul lines, and plenty of weeds instead of lawn.

We loved it.

It didn't bother us that the field was beat up. That only added to its charm. There was no uptight "stay off the field" sign like you'd get on a freshly limed and rolled, high-toned diamond. The low field felt shabbily comfortable, like a well-worn baseball glove. Like all good homes, it always had the "welcome" mat out.

Though we played most of our ball on the low field, occasionally circumstance would force us to the Little League diamond. You'd think we would have been delighted to play there and we were. We were delighted to play anywhere. But oddly, we also felt uncomfortable, like when you had to get out of your play clothes and put on your "good suit" on Sunday. There was something weird about the dressed up Little League diamond and its faux-Big-League pretensions, like seeing a four-year-old girl

heavily painted in adult make-up for a beauty pageant.

Later, when I actually played Little League ball for MAC Finance in the South LL in the mid-60s, I still had that feeling. "We're kids," I used to think. "What are we doing in these uniforms? Why are those grownups in the stands?" Organized ball was a mere adjunct to our preferred sandlot action, fine for the challenge but not nearly as much fun.

When I was a kid, we lived the park. We breathed the park. We were the park.

Back then baseball was king, particularly sandlot ball, an improvisation that took many forms depending on how many guys you had. There were no uniforms or

Unless there's an organized game, Deming stands empty & neglected.

scoreboards, no bases other than old newspapers held in place by rocks, no adults. It was a kid's version of jazz. You made it up as you went along. You riffed.

So many kids used Deming for sandlot ball that you were lucky to find an available diamond. Deming had four official fields: the low field, the softball field, the Little League field, and the Babe Ruth diamond. There were also two makeshift fields. I can recall many a day when all six fields were going at once.

The parks ruled back then, but those days are long gone. You need to understand that to grasp what's going on today with the seemingly easy task of spending \$1 million in Bossidy Bucks turned into head-scratching rocket science.

Today, Deming's low field is still there, not that kids use it for pickup. The softball field has been replaced by the Little League diamond, more pretentious than ever with a press box, an electronic scoreboard, a concession stand, and (I kid you not) a sprinkler system. Beyond the left field fence is a hideous parking lot where the swings and sand-box used to be. That lot forever wrecked the ambience of Deming, which was once all pine trees, earth, and grass off limits to the throaty growls of polluted auto exhaust and migraine car stereos.

There are no makeshift ball fields. Not enough demand. In fact, unless there's an organized game going, Deming, like most parks, stands empty and neglected. Kids don't riff anymore. They've got too many other distractions, most involving video screens. You see places like Coolidge Park, so overgrown that you'd never guess it was ever a park.

Today the same extensive collection of parks far outstrips demand of the present-day population, nearly 20,000 people smaller and far older. Many of the parks lay wasted. We have coupled this imbalance with the unrealistic notion that everything has to be the biggest, the best, the most high-tech because it's for "the children." Somewhere along the way, monkey bars got lumped with land mines on the danger scale. This biggest-best attitude has become the counterfeit of heartfelt interest in the parks themselves. It's a subtle difference that explains a lot. It explains, for example, the latent guilt apparent in the desire to purchase \$65,000 "playground structures" while neglecting parkland itself.

Our parks have become second-class citizens. Are you surprised that paralysis set in? When given a \$1 million gift from native son Larry Bossidy, the city couldn't figure out what to do with it, despite Bossidy's insistent and oft-repeated direction. Bossidy said he wanted his gift used to improve the existing playing fields, including Wahconah Park.

So what did Pittsfield do? Naturally, it ignored Bossidy. The first time the city dipped into Bossidy Bucks, it didn't touch the playing fields. It bought \$150,000 worth of equipment. Then it went through a period of navel gazing. Recently it offered its next attempt at spending the money, a pork-fatted \$550,000 plan that included \$205,000 for playground equipment, the building of new fields, and construction of "accessible bathrooms for Boundless Playground." The Boundless Playground doesn't even exist, and Bossidy specified in a letter to the Parks Commission in March that he didn't want his money used to build this facility. Go figure.

The council wisely rejected the plan on three grounds: 1.) a multiyear spending schedule that would have encumbered future administrations; 2.) the vagueness of the plan; 3.) the whopping chunk eaten up by bucks that fail to honor Bossidy's intent for the money. With its vote, the council proved it was paying attention.

What should be done with the Bossidy Bucks? Do what the man wants. Improve the playing fields. Don't build new fields. Forget about Boundless playgrounds, fancy equipment, and \$65,000 "playground structures." You can build a house for less than that. Go back to low-tech fun. Get retro. Embrace the "monkey bars approach." Ask any kid: the simpler the toy, the more the fun. That's how you get kids back into the parks.

Dan Valenti hosts "The Dan Valenti Show" weekday mornings on WBRK radio.

When the price is right

Cultural freebies abound during the summer



A free Eagles Band concert attracted hundreds to Springside Park this past Tuesday. See pages 12-13 for a sampler of free summer arts & culture options in the Pittsfield area.

7/24/03

Group planning 'Sheeptacular' summer

PITTSFIELD — An agricultural-themed citywide art project for next year was announced Monday at Park Square by the Sheeptacular Pittsfield Committee, under the direction of Chairwoman Mary Rentz. Park Square was the site of the first American agricultural fair in 1810.

"The idea behind this project is to transform the streetscape of our city for Pittsfield residents, and for a much wider base of tourists, into a playground for artist-decorated Merino sheep," Rentz said.

Between 50 and 75 artist-conceived fiberglass sheep will be displayed along the principal streets of the city from June 5 to Sept. 18.

At the announcement ceremony, Rentz displayed the model for the Merino sheep figure designed by Cowpainters Inc.

Nicknamed "Merry Merino," the model will be on display at the Berkshire Museum during the annual Festival of Trees, beginning this Saturday. When the festival ends, the faux sheep will take up residency at the new Pittsfield Visitors Center on South Street.

Citywide activities

The project will include historical exhibits at Arrowhead and the Berkshire Athenaeum, special events and parties including a "Baa-BQ," school curriculum enhancements, Sheep-to-Shawl and Sheep-to-Table programs in the city schools and at Hancock Shaker Village, public art forums, a "Sheeptalkqua" featuring local actors as historical figures in the wool and sheep industries, and related events such as sheep walks and knit-ins.

Merinos, first brought to Berkshire County in 1807 by James D. Colt, became the central resource

for an industry that helped turn Pittsfield into an industrial center.

To fully provide the 75 sheep and 40 school sheep — smaller forms to be decorated by children and exhibited at the Berkshire Artisans Gallery on Renne Avenue — the project's budget calls for raising \$257,500.

With donations and commitments from Aug. 8 to date, the money raised so far is \$180,250.

The principal underwriters, Legacy Banks and Laurin Publishing Co., have committed \$30,000 each to the project.

The project is being shepherded by Glenn A. Russo, deputy director of the city's Department of Community Development; community development specialist Laurie Mick; athenaeum Director Ronald B. Latham; Berkshire Museum Director Ann Mintz; James R. McGrath, director of community services; Daniel M. O'Connell, commissioner of culture for the city of Pittsfield; Yvonne Pearson, director of Downtown Inc., and Betsey Selkowitz, major gifts chairman.

Mayor Sara Hathaway and representatives of some of the major financial backers of the project were on hand at Monday's ceremony.

In addition to Laurin and Legacy, current financial backers include the Berkshire Bank Foundation, Callahan Outdoor Advertising, Petricca Industries, K-B Toys, Country Curtains/Red Lion Inn, GE Plastics, General Dynamics, Banknorth, Banknorth Investments, Dayspring Realtors Inc., Berkshire Art Association and the Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom program.

The artists' reconceptions of the sheep will be auctioned; Habitat for Humanity and Recordings



Photo by Kevin Sprague
'Merry Merino,' the first of the fiberglass sheep planned in the city, was unveiled at Park Square on Monday.

for the Blind will benefit from the proceeds. Supporters may allocate receipts from the auction to a charity or organization of their choice. Information packets for additional sponsors are available from Rentz and through the committee.

An artist selection committee will receive applications beginning in December; the application deadline is Jan. 26.

Applications will be available Dec. 1 at City Hall, Office of Community and Economic Development; Downtown Inc.; Berkshire Athenaeum; Berkshire Museum; Hancock Shaker Village; in the Lee, Dalton and Williamstown libraries; at www.sheeptacular.org, or by mail from Sheeptacular Pittsfield, P.O. Box 724, Pittsfield, MA 01202. All requirements are in the package being prepared by the committee.

Dow reports daily in The Eagle, except Mondays

Vandalism increase troubles Pittsfield officials

continued from page 1

more difficult to tear down the new benches and fixtures.

"We're always looking towards making things longer lasting," he said.

McGrath said that part of the city's approach involves cross-department coordination. The director said that increased police presence with auxiliary officers and more random checks by officers on patrol are a part of the solution.

"That is happening," police chief Anthony Riello said. "Our auxiliary police unit is focusing very heavily on schools and parks."

This volunteer unit, which Riello calls the "eyes and ears" of the department, cannot arrest vandals, but can contact the dispatcher so an arresting officer can respond.

Also, the chief said some suspects have been caught for breaking and entering school properties. These arrests, he said, will help the department determine what "common denominators" exist among other damaged properties. The stepped-up enforcement with auxiliary officers has been an effective method in the past, he said, and the "refocus" should help deter more damage.

School superintendent Bill Travis echoed these solutions for school

property. "At this point it's about sharing information and increasing patrols," he said.

Travis said damage to windows at several city schools, graffiti on school walls and more extensive damage at Taconic High School represent an increase in malicious activity. At Taconic, windows were broken, the school entered, two cars stolen and the electric connections between the school and Western Massachusetts Electric Company lines were burnt out.

Some damage, the superintendent said, is "petty" and is more of an annoyance than a major problem. The electrical damage, however, was more severe and repairing it went beyond Fortini's department. WMECO workers had to redraw the lines, Travis said, and the initial estimates ranged from \$10,000 to as much as \$50,000.

"It has been a wave of activity that I haven't experienced before," Travis said. "We're doing a variety of things to target those places where we've had incidents and then those where we've had more than one incident."

"Vandalism does occur in spurts," Riello said.

While the occurrence this summer is greater, the chief said the level of activity might be related to how many

vandals there are and how the incidents are connected. With every reported act, the department adds to a database to help identify links.

Travis and Fortini are also considering temporary surveillance cameras that could be set up at the affected schools. Fortini said besides Taconic, Allendale, Egremont and Morningside schools had windows and roofs damaged. The maintenance director is looking at increased lighting and fences near low roofs to further discourage vandals.

Travis said he is also hoping to get neighborhood crime watch groups involved, to check school properties after dusk when playgrounds and fields are closed and to be wary of unlawful activity.

"We've put a variety of things on the table," he said.

Downtown Inc. director Yvonne Pearson has had some success with watch groups. Pearson said downtown business leaders have a beautification and safety committee that takes tours through the business district to determine problem spots — either locales that have been vandalized or potential problem areas. This group, she said, reports to the police and the public works departments about buildings that need repairs or have been otherwise damaged. The

group has also organized a telephone network for business owners to inform other businesses when something has gone awry.

"Within ten minutes every merchant on the street knows that there is a problem or a potential problem," She said. It is these "eyes on the street" that keep most vandal activity down.

But the North Street sidewalk was vandalized this weekend when planting urns were overturned, and flowers uprooted. Pearson said this willful destruction is irritating, but not a deterrent for the group's beautification projects.

"It's particularly frustrating for the groups that work together to put these things together," Pearson said. "[But] you can't just throw up your hands and say we're not going to do that anymore because somebody tore up flowers."

McGrath said he hopes the department's "adopt a park" will help curb vandalism as well. The director said a handful of groups have come forward to look after neighborhood parks and he hopes these additional "eyes and ears" will also spot and report damage.

"That's meant to not only engage the citizenry in stewardship in the park," McGrath said. "But also just to keep an eye out on things."

Plants struck more than one dozen North Street planters on Saturday night.



Vandalism plagues Pittsfield

By Scott Eldridge II

Smashed sinks, remnants of vehicles, burnt electrical lines, submerged park benches, uprooted plants and broken windows are just some results of a wave of vandalism that has struck the city this summer.

"From what I'm told, it has never been this bad," said Mayor Sara Hathaway.

The destruction has been widespread from city streets to lakeside parks. Repairing the damage has added work and expense to municipal budgets and has challenged city officials to find new ways to stop vandals from attacking city properties.

"It's kind of hard," said maintenance director Ernie Fortini. "There are so many buildings and so many places to be."

City workers, said Fortini, have been pressed to repair windows, doors, bathrooms and more around the city. To some extent, this type of property damage is not unusual, he said. Broken windows, dented doors and graffiti are typical fare for city maintenance crews, who repair both municipal and school property damage.

This summer, though, there have been some attacks where vandals went beyond what is "normal," Fortini said.

"The break at Wild Acres was unusual," he said.

At the conservation area, vandals trashed a restroom building. The \$4,600 worth of damage included smashed toilets, sinks and windows. Fortini said crews had to replace all the fixtures in both bathrooms.

The spike in vandal activity, said parks director Jim McGrath, started at the outset of the school summer break. During a three-week period following the school year, benches at Burbank Park and the fishing pier at Onota lake were thrown into the water, "Mutt Mitt" dispensers were torn down and the Wild Acres bathrooms were vandalized. Also, the director said "perennial problems" including off-road vehicle traffic on athletic fields, broken glass bottles and litter on park property and other damage adds to the maintenance work.

"It has been extensive and we've done our best to repair things and fix things as best we can," McGrath said. "This was the worst in many years."

McGrath is looking at more durable solutions for repairs. Sturdier park benches, better anchored dispensers and stronger fixtures have been used to replace the damaged property. Hopefully, he said, the better materials will make it

See VANDALISM page 9

Parks commission eyes design consultant

The parks department will advertise for a consultant to design upgrades of fields that will be funded with Bossidy Bucks.

The parks commission voted unanimously Monday to develop a request for proposals for a landscape designer or architect.

"The real bulk of the Bossidy expenditures was field work," said community services director Jim McGrath. "We need to make sure we are going about it in the most appropriate and thoughtful manner."

McGrath says that the parks department lacks the in-house technical expertise to design major field work. The consultant would work with city officials to develop a bid package, including drawings, outlining the scale of work for potential contractors.

He hopes that hiring a consultant will allow an "aggressive" schedule to begin field work as early as the fall.

"This requires getting someone on board who knows what they're doing," said McGrath.

The consultant will be charged with designing field upgrades for Kirvin Park, Demick Park, the Doyle memorial Complex and Clapp Park. In addition the consultant would assist with planning for possible new soccer/lacrosse fields.



Charles Plourd and Gladys Clairmont relax during Tuesday evening's free concert. The Eagles Band next performs August 5 at Burbank Park.

The Eagles Band performed Tuesday at Springside Park Appreciative Audience

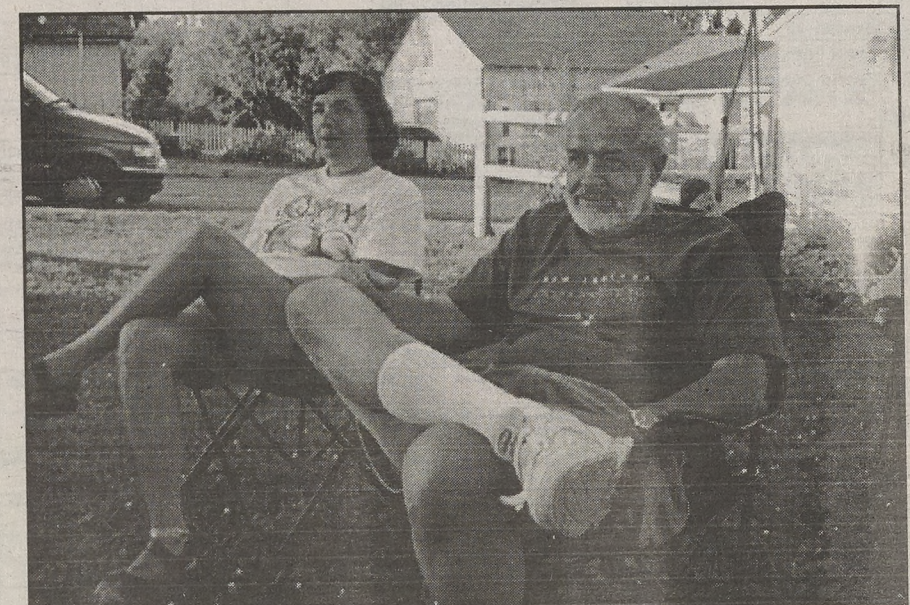


Chris Cowan and Kelly Vincent camp out during Tuesday's concert. Cowan and Vincent chose a close spot to listen to a friend perform.



Peter and Marie Fedoryshyn find a secluded spot near the herb garden to listen to their son, Christopher, perform with the Eagles Band.

Photos by
Scott Eldridge II



Parks commissioner Gene Nadeau and his wife Fran enjoy the evening music in the shade of a Springside Park tree.



Meredith Alexander and Maribel Zamudio play a game of cards while listening to the music Tuesday.

TAYLOR MEMORIALS



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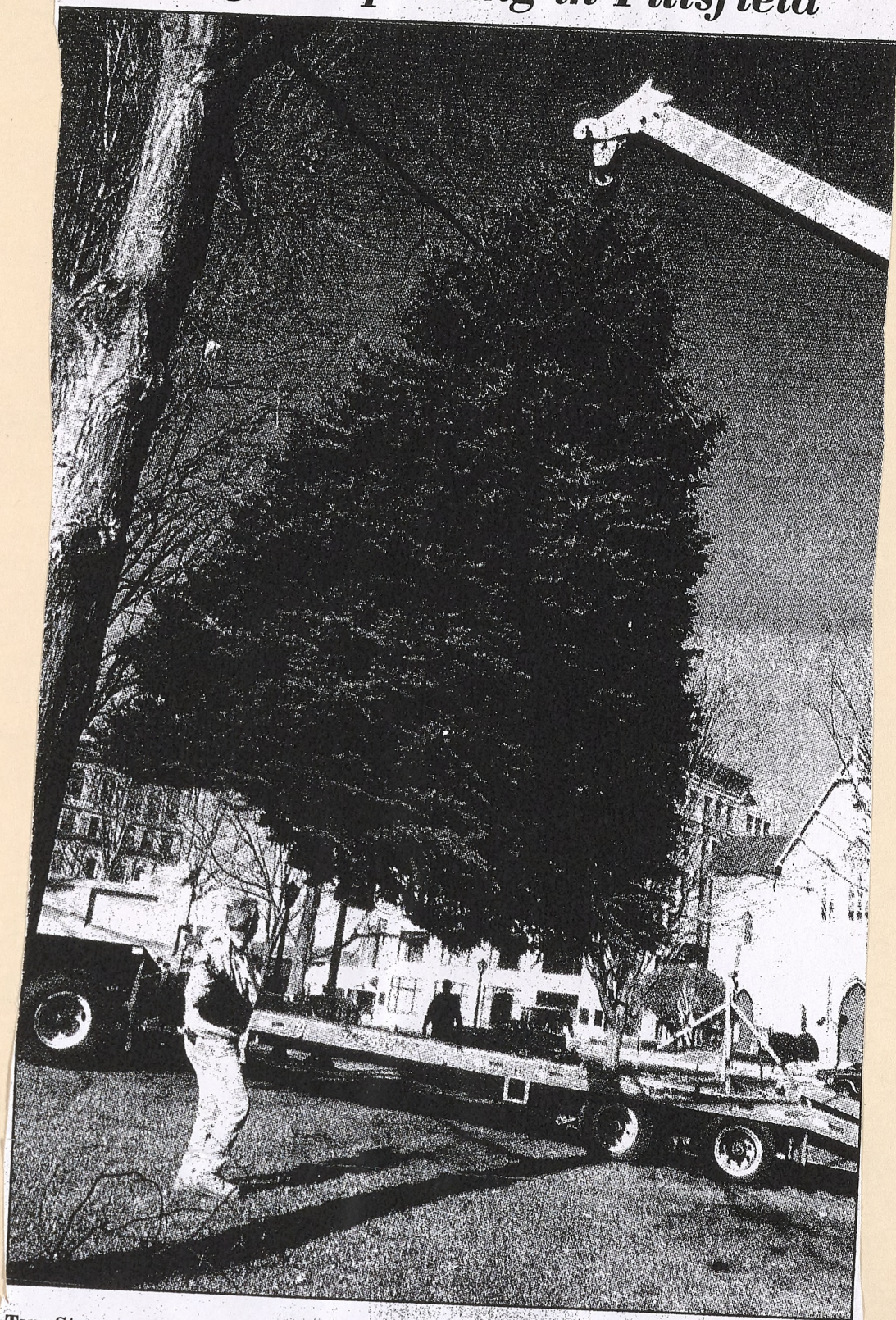
EBONY

This wonderful mother was abandoned along with 8 darling puppies. Ebony is a Lab/Collie/Shepard mix. The puppies are weaned from Mom and can be adopted now. They need lots of handling, but that will be easy to do.



For information about adopting Ebony, her puppies or another pet, call the Eleanor Sonsini Municipal Animal Shelter at 448-9800.

Diagonal parking in Pittsfield



Tony Stracuzzi, at lower left, and workers from the Pittsfield Parks Department install this year's Christmas tree at Park Square yesterday. The tree was donated to the city by James and Jo-Ann Suttle and members of the Villanova family in memory of their mother, Ida Villanova, who died on April 23, 2002.

Ben Garver / Berkshire Eagle Staff

12/03

Black Bears' future still questionable

By Tony Dobrowolski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Berkshire Black Bears principal owner Jonathan Fleisig said Thursday that he has not talked to anyone about moving the team to New Haven, Conn., next year, and that he wants to meet with city officials here before making any decisions.

"Before I go talk to anyone, I'd still like to get together with the people in the Berkshires," Fleisig said in a telephone interview from his New York City office. "I want to see what ideas either Mayor Hathaway or [Mayor-elect] Ruberto have."

"I want to learn what they think. I'm trying to obtain information, and then I'll make a decision. It's been a much more strenuous process than I thought."

The New Haven Register has reported that the Black Bears will move to New Haven as soon as an ownership group representing the Northeast League, headed by New York investment adviser Rick Handelman, can come to an agreement with the Baseball Foundation of Connecticut on a lease to use the 6,200-seat Yale Field

I've got three weeks to figure it all out.

11/10/03
BEARS, continued on B4

Black Bears' fate undecided

BEARS from B1

next season.

The Black Bears' two-year licensing agreement with the city of Pittsfield to use Wahconah Park and its lease to rent office space at the Berkshire Common on South Street both expired Oct. 31.

Asked when he would let Pittsfield know what his plans for the Black Bears are, Fleisig said: "I would say November 26. It's when I'm leaving on my honeymoon. I've got three weeks to figure it all out."

"There's two sides to waiting," he said. "One is you get a clearer picture of what is happening, and the other is you limit your sales ability. But I haven't had many [ticket] sales, so we're not hurting ourselves."

Ticket sales

The Black Bears averaged fewer than 1,000 fans per game during the 2003 season, the lowest average in the eight-team Northeast League. Fleisig said in August that he was concerned there wasn't enough revenue in the Pittsfield market to keep the Black Bears at Wahconah Park for another year. Hathaway has said she was willing to work with Fleisig to find a way to work out the team's revenue problems.

Fleisig and Ruberto have not met.

"I have not been in touch with Jonathan Fleisig," Ruberto said Thursday. "We are a day after the election, and I am waiting to see what is going on. I certainly wouldn't want to interfere with the conversations that the mayor is having with Jonathan Fleisig and, until I meet with the mayor, I would feel uncomfortable about making that call."

The Register reported earlier this week that the Black Bears are closer to moving to New Haven, and that the lease negotiations have been held up because Handelman's attorney had a family emergency in St. Louis.

Fleisig said he has not spoken with anyone about moving the Black Bears to New Haven.

"I have not had an official conversation with anybody," he said. "I have the utmost respect for [Handelman] and what they're trying to do, but at the end of the day, I have no more knowledge than you do."

No decision made

"Nothing has changed from the day the playoffs ended," Fleisig said. "I haven't made any decisions. I haven't signed a lease to the Berkshires or anywhere."

He said having the team's leases in Pittsfield run out doesn't give the impression that the Black Bears are leaving town.

"Because it's not relevant," he said. "If I'm going to make a deal with whomever I'm going to make it with, I'm going to get a new lease."

"Don't read into it," Fleisig said. "Just enjoy the beautiful Berkshires."

Handelman, a part-owner of the Northeast League's Brockton Rox, will be principal owner of a New Haven franchise if a lease to use Yale Field can be worked out, according to the Register. The Register also reported this week that Fleisig will remain as one of the team's owners when the Black Bears move to New Haven.

"I haven't spoken with the New Haven papers, so I wouldn't know," Fleisig said.

Handelman has not returned phone calls from The Eagle that were placed at both his office and his home in Scarsdale, N.Y., earlier this week. In a voice recording left on his office phone, Handelman said he will be out of town until today.

Walter Esdaile, New Haven's director of business development who sits on the search committee to bring baseball back to New Haven, said the lease negotiations are progressing.

"I don't think we have a sort of magic date," he said. "We'd like to get a commitment on bringing baseball back and to get a team. I hope it happens very soon. It could happen the next time we talk."

Esdaile said Fleisig has not been involved in the lease negotiations in New Haven. "We're not talking with him, nor have we ever met him," Esdaile said.

He also repeated what Northeast League Commissioner Miles Wolff said last month: If Handelman's group can secure a lease to use Yale Field, it would then have to see which Northeast League teams are available to be moved. "They haven't indicated which team," Esdaile said. "We knew that up front. We have not talked to anyone who is affiliated with the Black Bears."

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11/10/03



Organizers plan to relocate the Relay for Life — a several hundred thousand dollar benefit for the American Cancer Society — from Wahconah Regional High School to Burbank Park.

Relay will relocate to Burbank Park

continued from page 1

with the neighbors" to ensure that the large-scale, all-night walkathon with camping does not affect nearby residences.

The Berkshire Relay for Life is entering its eighth year. The 24-hour event features teams that raise pledges and obtain sponsorships.

Highlights include a "survivors' lap" and the illumination of sponsored luminaires. Most teams "camp" out in tents at the site.

The event — part of a model tailored to different markets — serves to show support for cancer survivors and annually raises several hundred thousand dollars for the American Cancer Society.

McGrath said some specifics will require attention because the park's natural environment differs from the track and open fields at Wahconah.

"Certainly over the next several months the parks department will

work closely with the organizers," he said.

Among other issues, McGrath said that the luminaires will be placed out only during the symbolic survivors' walk and "there will be volunteers placed all along the path with fire extinguishers."

Issues addressed

McGrath said that during the commission meeting, the volunteer coordinators addressed commissioners' concerns about trash collection, insurance, security and emergency services.

"They will leave the park in the exact same condition they found it," he said. "They have a very big group of folks working on this."

Due to limited parking at Burbank Park, a shuttle system will be set up with off-site parking, presumably at Taconic High School.

McGrath said that a limited number of on-site parking spaces will be

reserved for individuals utilizing the public access boat launch at the park.

The community services director thinks the event is a good match for the Pittsfield park. "It's a community-building event and I think it will be good for Burbank Park," he said.

Traci Heath, the American Cancer Society's regional community executive, could not be reached as of press time for comment.

The local organizing committee is scheduled to meet November 19 to discuss the event.

The formal kickoff of the 2004 Relay is scheduled for March 18 with a gathering for potential team captains.

Relay for Life organizers still need to book Controy Pavilion for the event.

The parks department only accepts calendar year reservations for the rental of the Burbank Park facility; the reservations book for 2004 opens January 2.

Bears' owner refuses to say if move looms

By Tony Dobrowolski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Three days before their two-year licensing agreement with the city of Pittsfield expires on Halloween, the Berkshire Black Bears gave strong indications that they may leave town.

Mayor Sara Hathaway said yesterday she had been told a Ryder truck was spotted yesterday morning in front of the Black Bears' offices at the Berkshire Common on South Street and at Wahconah Park.

Bouton no longer interested.
Page B4.

The team's offices were locked at 3 p.m., and only a few items could be spotted inside. Some of the items were scattered along the floor as though someone had been moving. A woman who works in another office in the Berkshire Common said she observed workers moving material out of the Black Bears' offices into the truck yesterday morning. "They emptied it out," the woman said. "They were there for quite awhile."

Reached on his cell phone late yesterday afternoon, the Black Bears' principal owner, Jonathan Fleisig, said he believed General Manager Michael Kardamis had been removing personal items from the office to take with him to his home in Albany, Ga., where he lives in the off-season. Fleisig said the Black Bears also needed to clear out their offices because their lease with the Crowne Plaza also expires Oct. 31.

"I don't know what transpired," Fleisig said, "but I have to believe Mike was moving to Albany, Ga., and had to move his stuff out."

Despite a published report in a Connecticut newspaper last week that the Black Bears would be moving to New Haven, Conn., next year, Fleisig yesterday denied that the team had left

A woman observed workers moving material out of the Black Bears' offices into a Ryder truck yesterday morning.

town yesterday.

"I'm not running anywhere," Fleisig said.

On Monday, Fleisig left a telephone message with The Eagle in which he said he had been on vacation last week and had no new information to report on the status of the team.

"When I know something, you'll know something," Fleisig said. "Other than that, I don't have anything [to say]."

Yesterday, Fleisig declined to comment on whether the Black Bears would stay or leave Pittsfield, but said he would make a decision sometime in November.

"I literally just got back from vacation," Fleisig said. "I haven't even had a conversation with Mike yet."

Hathaway said Fleisig had left telephone messages with the mayor's office last week in which he told her not to believe the rumors about the Black Bears moving to New Haven.

"But when we spoke, it was clear that he is giving strong consideration to alternative locations for his franchise," she said.

"It didn't sound like he'd made a decision yet," Hathaway said.

"But he repeatedly indicated he did not receive enough love from the city of Pittsfield, notwithstanding my support for the team."

BLACK BEARS, continued on B4

Black Bears appear ready to leave city

BLACK BEARS from B1

In August, Fleisig said he needed more support from the community in order to make enough revenue to keep the Black Bears in Pittsfield. The Black Bears drew an average of 974 fans per game last year, the lowest total in the Northeast League. They were the only team in the league to average fewer than 1,000 fans per game.

The New Haven (Conn.) Register reported last week that the Black Bears would be moving to New Haven once a group representing the Northeast League finishes negotiating a lease with Yale University to allow a team to play at Yale Field.

Northeast League Commis-

ioner Miles Wolff has confirmed that an ownership group representing the eight-team league is trying to negotiate a lease with Yale to play at 6,200-seat Yale Field next year. But Wolff has said the league won't decide to relocate a team there until a lease has been signed.

Wolff said yesterday that progress has been made on the lease negotiations but that an agreement had not yet been reached.

"I don't think anything will be in place for a couple of weeks," Wolff said yesterday.

Asked when Fleisig, who is on the Northeast League's board of directors, would have to notify the league of whether he will stay in Pittsfield, Wolff said, "Something has to happen fairly soon. I've already got a schedule made up with Berkshire written on it."

"I do know that Jonathan has looked at other places," Wolff said. "I know there's movement in New Haven, so we'll see what happens."

In what may have been the Black Bears' final act in Pittsfield, the Parks Commission on Monday night approved the team's 2003 facility expense report for the use of Wahconah Park.

Under the terms of the team's licensing agreement with the city,

the Black Bears were required to pay \$75,000 each year toward the maintenance of Wahconah Park's playing field.

James McGrath, Pittsfield's director of community services, said yesterday the Black Bears exceeded that \$150,000 threshold by roughly \$400. The team spent \$121,000 on maintenance to the park last year, and \$29,000 this year, he said.

The Parks Commission rejected one invoice the team submitted, a \$600 bill to repair turf damage done to the playing field after the staging for the play "Damn Yankees," which took place at Wahconah Park this summer, was removed.

"I think that simply was an oversight" on the Black Bears' part, McGrath said.

Tony Dobrowolski can be reached at tdobrowolski@berkshireeagle.com.

The Berkshire Eagle, Friday, October 31, 2003 — B3

Black Bears: It's not over till it's ...

By Tony Dobrowolski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — There was activity inside the Berkshire Black Bears' offices on South Street again yesterday, but the baseball team's president and general manager, Michael Kardamis, said the materials being moved belonged to him, not the team.

Kardamis, who was spotted moving material out of the team's office into a pickup truck yesterday morning, said he was moving personal items out to bring them to Albany, Ga., his wife's hometown.

Kardamis, who has been the franchise's president and general manager since it played in Lynn as the Massachusetts Mad Dogs, said he was leaving both the team and professional baseball to move to Georgia, where his wife's family lives.

"I'm making a career change, actually," said Kardamis, a native of Taunton who attended the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Ryder truck spotted

Kardamis also confirmed he had been moving personal items out of the team's office Tuesday, when a Ryder truck had been spotted parked by the front door.

The Black Bears' two-year licensing agreement with the city of Pittsfield to use Wahconah Park and their lease with the Crowne Plaza for office space both expire today.

But Kardamis said his clearing out the team's offices doesn't necessarily mean the Black Bears are leaving Pittsfield.

"This definitely doesn't mean the team's not coming back," Kardamis said.

The New Haven (Conn.) Register reported last week that the Black Bears will move to New Haven next year once an ownership group representing the Northeast League reaches an agreement with Yale University to use 6,200-seat Yale Field.

Kardamis referred all inquiries about the team's future to the Black Bears' principal owner, Jonathan Fleisig.

Still undetermined

"That is all up to Jonathan," Kardamis said. "But there's always a chance (the Black Bears could remain in Pittsfield) until a deal is done."

"That stuff coming out of there (New Haven) is so premature," Kardamis said. "Wait until we see what happens."

Fleisig has declined to comment on whether the Black Bears will leave Pittsfield. But Mayor Sara Hathaway said Fleisig is "giving strong consideration to alternative locations for his franchise."

Rick Handelman, an investment banker from Scarsdale, N.Y., who heads the group representing the Northeast League that is negotiating the lease with Yale University, said he is looking for a general manager.

According to the New Haven Register, Handelman would be one of the principal owners of the New Haven franchise and is putting together an ownership group to run a team in that city.

Tony Dobrowolski can be reached at tdobrowolski@berkshireeagle.com.

Parks commission says festival organizer must provide specifics

A political organization's plans for a music festival at Burbank Park remain in limbo.

The parks commission on Monday tabled action on the Berkshire Fatherhood Coalition's proposed "shared parenting" Berkshire Music Festival.

Commissioners — who have been asked several times to approve use of the lakeside park for the event — said the organizer still hasn't addressed concerns related to security, parking, trash and noise.

Rinaldo Del Gallo III, the proponent of the event, said the free festival would benefit low-income residents and attract tourists. He stated that he has taken care of all of the commission's concerns.

"I don't think there is any issue unaddressed," he said.

But commissioners said that Del Gallo's proposal has been short on specifics that are needed before they can authorize the program, which Del Gallo originally envisioned as a four-day event but which is now targeted for August 2 & 3.

As commissioners cited the need for professional security and rental of a dumpster for trash, Del Gallo chafed.

"We only have a budget of \$1,000," he said.

"That's an issue," said commissioner Jane Bresnahan.

Parks maintenance supervisor Tony Stracuzzi said the concept of a music festival is great but that the details are spotty.

"I can see it going on year after year and getting bigger and better," said Stracuzzi. "But you're jumping into this with \$1,000 and no plan."

"This is really planned, this is planned," countered Del Gallo. "This is a very well and serious planned event and I don't like to be told it's not."

Bresnahan said that Del Gallo appears to have scheduled the music that would run from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. each day but not the logistics.

"What's not planned is the detail and the security that goes around it," she said. "Where is your committee and your support?...We are not going to skimp on security, we are not going to skimp on sanitation."

Del Gallo's plan to have a few volunteers serve as security — as well as one armed volunteer sheriff — worried commissioners, who envision a crowd of more than 1,000 at Burbank Park on a August weekend day even without a festival.

"I see Woodstock II popping up here," said commissioner Gene Nadeau. "If it's a hot weekend that place is going to be mobbed anyway...I need to see more concrete [plans]."

Police presence

Commissioners said that Del Gallo must coordinate with police chief Anthony Riello to see if off-duty officers need to be hired for the event.

The promoter said that hiring off-duty police isn't realistic. "The bottom line is if I have to get a bunch of stuff that costs a whole bunch of money... then we don't have it," he said.

Bresnahan said that's not a sensible approach. "You're willing to bring 1,000 people somewhere without a policeman, unsupervised, without control," she said.

The commissioner said that Del Gallo — as a first-time event pro-

moter with a limited budget and no experience — might fare better with a more modest event, perhaps a single afternoon.

"Trying to change the structure of the music festival at the last second is not going to help," said Del Gallo.

The promoter's failure to provide evidence of a plan to deal with the trash created by a crowd also prompted questions, though he promised to rent a dumpster if that would allay the board's concerns.

Commissioner John Marchesi also questioned the promoter's desire to utilize almost all the public areas of Burbank Park.

"Get it all in one area where you can control it," Marchesi urged.

Other issues raised included parking, the lack of provisions for first aid and a need for a larger organizing committee.

Marchesi stated he will not support use of the entire park for the event. He also said that without a sign-off from the chief of police, proof of a trash plan and specifics about crowd control, he wouldn't authorize use of the park.

Commissioner chair Mike Filpi said the board will look anew at the request if Del Gallo addresses the issues and provides written documentation.

"When you come back with stuff, there's going to [need to] be paperwork," said Filpi. "This is an event of such magnitude."

To Del Gallo's dismay, the commission voted 5-0 to delay action on the request.

Del Gallo has also unsuccessfully lobbied the city council for a \$3,000 grant to support the program.

League official denies report on Black Bears

By Tony Dobrowolski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Northeast League Commissioner Miles Wolff yesterday denied a published report that said the Berkshire Black Bears were negotiating a lease that would allow the baseball team to move to New Haven, Conn.

The New Haven Register reported yesterday that the Black Bears' ownership was negotiating a lease with Yale University. If the lease is finalized, the Black Bears could move to New Haven within 10 days, the Register reported yesterday.

Yale University, not the city of New Haven, owns 12,000-seat Yale Field, where the Black Bears would play if they moved to New Haven.

Yale Field, which was built in 1927, is the former home of the Class AA Eastern League New Haven Ravens. The Ravens, who played at Yale Field for 10 years, are moving to Manchester, N.H.

Yale Field's seating capacity is three times the size of 4,000-seat Wahconah Park. Wolff visited New Haven earlier this month to determine the feasibility of placing a Northeast League team in that city.

In a telephone interview from Quebec City, Wolff said Rick Handelman, an investment banker from Scarsdale, N.Y., who is a minority owner

of the league's Brockton Rox, is negotiating a lease with Yale on behalf of the Northeast League to have a team play there.

But Wolff said that team currently is not the Black Bears. "There's no plan to move them right now," Wolff said. "Could it happen? Yes. But it hasn't happened yet."

Wolff said if Handelman is able to come to an agreement with Yale, then he would have to find a team willing to move to New Haven.

"Are negotiations under way to bring a team [to New Haven]? Yes," Wolff said. "Is it the Black Bears? No, not really. Handelman is looking to have a team, but we would have to move a team, and there would have to be a team available."

"He's going through the first step to see if a lease is obtainable in New Haven," Wolff said. "If a lease is obtainable, he'll see which team is available."

The Black Bears' two-year lease with the city of Pittsfield to use Wahconah Park expires Oct. 31. The Black Bears have not done well either on the field or at the box office in their two years in Pittsfield. They averaged less than 1,000 fans per game this year, the lowest in the eight-team league.

Jonathan Fleisig, the Black Bears' principal owner, told

BEARS continued on B4

League official denies report on Black Bears

BEARS from B1

The Eagle in August that he planned to speak with Mayor Sara Hathaway about the team's future in Pittsfield around Oct. 1. But Fleisig and Hathaway both said earlier this month that discussions on the Black Bears' future had yet to take place.

Wolff said the Black Bears are one of the teams the Northeast League would consider moving to another city.

"Look at the attendance. The lease is up. I think if the right offer came up, Jonathan would look at it," said Wolff, "but he hasn't done anything."

Fleisig was in Las Vegas yesterday where the East Coast Hockey League team he owns, the Las Vegas Wranglers, played their home opener last night. He did not return phone calls from The Eagle left both on his cell phone and at the Wranglers' front office.

Wolff said he believed Fleisig and Hathaway have been discussing the Black Bears' future in Pittsfield. Hathaway, who told The Eagle earlier this month that she would try and work with the Black Bears to help the team remain in Pittsfield, also did not return a phone call seeking comment yesterday.

"Jonathan has had no contact with the New Haven folks," he added.

Wolff also said there is no guarantee that Handelman will get a lease to bring a Northeast League team to New Haven.

"There's lots of hurdles in New Haven," Wolff said. "It's Yale's facility. It's a lot more difficult

[dealing with a university] than a city. So it's not a done deal at all in New Haven."

The Register reported that Handelman "would be one of the principal owners of the New Haven franchise" and "is in the process of putting together an ownership group for a New Haven franchise." The paper also reported that Handelman has begun the process of finding a general manager to run a Northeast League team.

Wolff said yesterday that Fleisig still owns the Black Bears and has not been trying to sell the franchise to Handelman.

"Right now, Jonathan still owns the team 100 percent," Wolff said.

Handelman, who said he knows Fleisig from attending Northeast League owners' meetings, confirmed that he was putting together an ownership group, but denied that he was trying to purchase the Black Bears from Fleisig.

But Handelman said if he is able to obtain a lease in New Haven, he would approach Fleisig about selling.

"What I'm doing is putting together a group," Handelman said. "I'm going to go to Jonathan or another owner and offer to buy the team."

"I'd like to approach Jonathan," Handelman said. "I don't know what he's going to say."

"I am going to look for a general manager, that is true," Handelman said. "I feel if something happens, it would be fast."

Tony Dobrowolski can be reached at tdobrowolski@berkshireeagle.com.

10/22/03

Collegiate league eyes Wahconah ballpark

By Tony Dobrowolski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — A Connecticut man with ties to both professional and amateur baseball said he believes Wahconah Park is better suited for a summer collegiate league franchise than for another professional team.

Bob Wirz of Orange — who recently spoke with Mayor Sara Hathaway and Mayor-elect James M. Ruberto about the possibility of bringing a New England Collegiate Baseball League team to Pittsfield — said last week that he believes the aging 4,000-seat Wahconah Park, which was built in 1919, is a tough place for a professional team to be financially viable.

"I think Wahconah's age works against it," said Wirz, past president of the Waterbury (Conn.) Spirit of the Northeast League, which is now based in Lynn.

Talk of bringing an NECBL team to Wahconah Park for the 2004 season appears to have died after Ruberto told Wirz that he was more interested in having a minor league team come to Pittsfield.

Wirz said he is still interested in bringing an NECBL franchise to Pittsfield but that it appears the league's deadline for placing a team in Wahconah Park for the 2004 season has passed.

Others interested

According to several sources, before former Red Sox General Manager Dan Duquette received preliminary approval from the NECBL to move the league's Thread City Tides of Willimantic, Conn., to his sports academy in Hinsdale, discussions took place concerning the possibility of the Tides relocating to Wahconah Park.

Another NECBL owner, who spoke to The Eagle under the condition of anonymity, said that he also was interested in exploring the possibility of playing in Pittsfield.

Wirz, who was chief spokesman for former Major League Baseball Commissioners Bowie Kuhn and Peter Ueberroth for 10 years, said that a college league team would be more suitable for Wahconah Park because professional clubs need a tremendous amount of revenue to

"I think Wahconah's age works against it."

League eyes Pittsfield park

BASEBALL from B1

operate.

"To make a go of it in any professional league these days, you've got to generate a lot of revenue," he said. "A lot more than the [Berkshire] Black Bears could generate."

The Black Bears, who played in the Northeast League, struggled both on the field and at the gate in the two years they were at Wahconah Park. The team recently moved to New Haven, Conn.

Independent league teams such as the Black Bears have to generate more revenue to survive than minor league teams that are affiliated with major league clubs, such as the Pittsfield Mets and Astros of the Class A New York-Penn League that played at Wahconah Park between 1989 and 2000.

New York Penn League teams don't have to pay their players and coaching staffs because those expenses are picked up by the major league clubs. But teams like the Black Bears have to generate enough revenue to pay for all their expenses because they are independently owned and operated.

"A Northeast League team requires a minimum of \$800,000 to \$1 million [in revenue] to have a chance to break even, and that's a lot of money in a community that size," Wirz, said referring to Pittsfield.

"I think there's a sizable gap between what a college and a professional team would take to be successful. ... Pittsfield and the

NECBL are made for each other," Wirz said.

The NECBL resembles the New York-Penn League more than the Northeast League because fans can watch players who could end up playing major league baseball. The NECBL has some of the best college players in the country on its 13 teams.

Duquette said 63 NECBL players were drafted by major league clubs last year.

New York-Penn League teams for the most part are made up of former college players who have just been drafted by major league

teams and are playing professional baseball for the first time.

Northeast League teams have players who have played at higher minor-league levels than Class A, and some with small amounts of major league experience. But the majority of the Northeast League's players are generally older than their New York-Penn League counterparts, and most are no longer considered major league prospects.

"I think [an NECBL team] gives some of the benefit an affiliated team does because some of these guys are going to be drafted," Wirz said. "You don't have that with an independent professional club."

Bear season ends

The departure of the Berkshire Black Bears qualifies neither as a surprise nor a crisis.

The likelihood of a brief Pittsfield tenure for Jonathan Fleisig's itinerant independent baseball team was evident 23 months ago, when vindictive former Mayor Gerald Doyle, Jr. handed the keys of Wahconah Park to his mate.

Fleisig lost money in Pittsfield for two years and had little prospect of reversing that pattern.

But he kept Wahconah Park occupied — a goal for some in the community — and reactivated his dormant franchise while positioning for future options.

The Black Bears offered a poor product on the field and — compared to predecessors — made a subpar effort at marketing and local outreach.

Other than attaching the names of various charities to the schedule, Fleisig's squad never established a local presence, crucial in an industry which depends largely on advertising revenues.

Not once in two years did the Black Bears sponsor a promotion that generated buzz. Instead the team threw its resources into announcing a revolving door of no-name player signings — of interest only to a small pool of baseball diehards.

The competing Bouton-Elitzer baseball proposal for Wahconah Park would also likely have lost money, but would have maintained a stronger community presence. The Bouton-Elitzer concept involved marketing the minor league baseball experience, celebrating the quirks and limitations of Wahconah Park.

Fleisig's departure creates a vacuum but also provides an opportunity. With community realities in mind, city officials should carefully consider the future of Wahconah Park.

— Jonathan Levine

Pittsfield Parks Department offers North Pole calls on Dec. 15-16

PITTSFIELD — The Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation will conduct its 22nd annual North Pole Calling Program on Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 15 and 16, from 4:30 to 7 p.m.

Volunteer Santas and operators will again make personal phone calls to Pittsfield children. Information sheets have been sent

home with children in kindergarten and Grades 1 and 2.

Forms are also available at the Parks and Recreation office, 874 North St., or through the Parks Department Web site, www.pittsfieldparks.org. Completed forms must be returned by Friday, Dec. 12.

More than 325 children received Santa calls last year.

Three baseball leagues eyeing Wahconah Park

By Tony Dobrowolski

Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — With published reports indicating the Berkshire Black Bears may be closer to moving to New Haven, Conn., next year, three baseball leagues have indicated they are willing to explore the possibility of placing a team in Wahconah Park.

The heads of the New England Collegiate Baseball League, Northeast League and Atlantic League yesterday expressed varying degrees of interest in the possibility of playing in Pittsfield.

Of the three, the New England Collegiate Baseball League, a 13-team circuit consisting of teams stocked with players from some

of the country's top college baseball programs, expressed the most interest. The NECBL, one of the top summer college baseball leagues in the country, already has teams in North Adams and in Torrington, Conn., which is roughly 90 minutes south of Pittsfield. The league is currently discussing moving its team in Middletown, Conn., to Holyoke.

"The short answer is absolutely," NECBL Commissioner Kevin Melvane said from his office in Connecticut yesterday. "I believe that Pittsfield has a lot of baseball history with the field [Wahconah Park] in particular. There's a lot of charm and character to it."

One operator of a league franchise, who spoke to The Eagle under the condition of anonymity,

ty, said he would be willing to talk with representatives of the city of Pittsfield about the possibility of playing in Wahconah Park.

"Logistically, [Pittsfield] is right in the middle of where we live," said Joel Cooney, the NECBL's executive vice president.

Mayor Sara Hathaway did not return a telephone call yesterday.

BASEBALL, continued on A4

Three baseball leagues eyeing Wahconah Park

BASEBALL from A1

seeking comment on the city's efforts to attract another baseball team to Pittsfield if the Black Bears leave. But Hathaway did say last week that she would be willing to speak with any group that was interested in bringing a team to Pittsfield.

Ruberto in game

Mayor-elect James M. Ruberto said that he has talked with people who have an interest in bringing a baseball team to Pittsfield, but that they have asked him to keep their discussions confidential.

"But they are names that are known in the community at large," Ruberto said.

Ruberto said he had not talked with the Black Bears' principal owner Jonathan Fleisig, and would not say if he has spoken with South County residents Jim Boulton and Donald "Chip" Elitzer, who were interested in bringing a team to Wahconah Park two years ago.

"The people I have talked to have asked that I not divulge their names and, out of respect for

them, I am going to keep it that way," Ruberto said. "But we hope that in the next couple of weeks, conversations that we expect are forthcoming will be had, and at that time we'll be able to talk about it."

Asked if he was interested in whether North Adams' NECBL team would be willing to move to Pittsfield, Ruberto said:

"Not particularly them, but a team or a new team ... I have had a member of my campaign staff all ready contact the commissioner of the college league, so that we can determine what their interest would be in locating a franchise here. And I hope to see those conversations evolve over the next week as well."

Melvane said he has had no discussions with anyone representing Pittsfield, but added that Ruberto could have been referring to the commissioner of another college baseball league located in the Northeast.

Ruberto wasn't confident that Pittsfield wasn't able to bring a team to Wahconah in time for 2004.

"I don't know," Ruberto said. "We are running on a very short

league were to place another team in Pittsfield, it would need a compelling reason. The Black Bears drew less than 1,000 fans per game during the 2003 season, the lowest average among the Northeast League's eight teams.

"Somebody would have to have a real good plan on why it would be successful," Wolff said. "I'm not saying that the current operation wasn't successful, but there hasn't been a lot of response [from fans] in the two years they've been there."

Frank Boulton, the chief executive officer of the Atlantic League, said his league would be willing to take a look at Wahconah Park, but only as a site for a team that would play in a "short season" version of the league that will begin play in 2006.

The Atlantic League is similar to the Northeast League in that its nine teams are independently owned professional teams that are not affiliated with major league clubs. Boulton said plans call for the short-season league to provide a feeder system to the Atlantic League's nine current clubs, allowing them to replace players who sign with other teams during the season.

"We need a feeder system to replace our players," Boulton said. "We don't have an option on their contracts."

Plans call for the short-season teams to play 92 games between Memorial Day and Labor Day, Boulton said.

Boulton said he would not speak to Pittsfield representatives until any issues regarding the Northeast League's use of Wahconah Park have been resolved. Boulton said plans call for the Atlantic League's short-season teams to play teams in the Northeast League. "I don't want to step on anybody's toes," Boulton said.

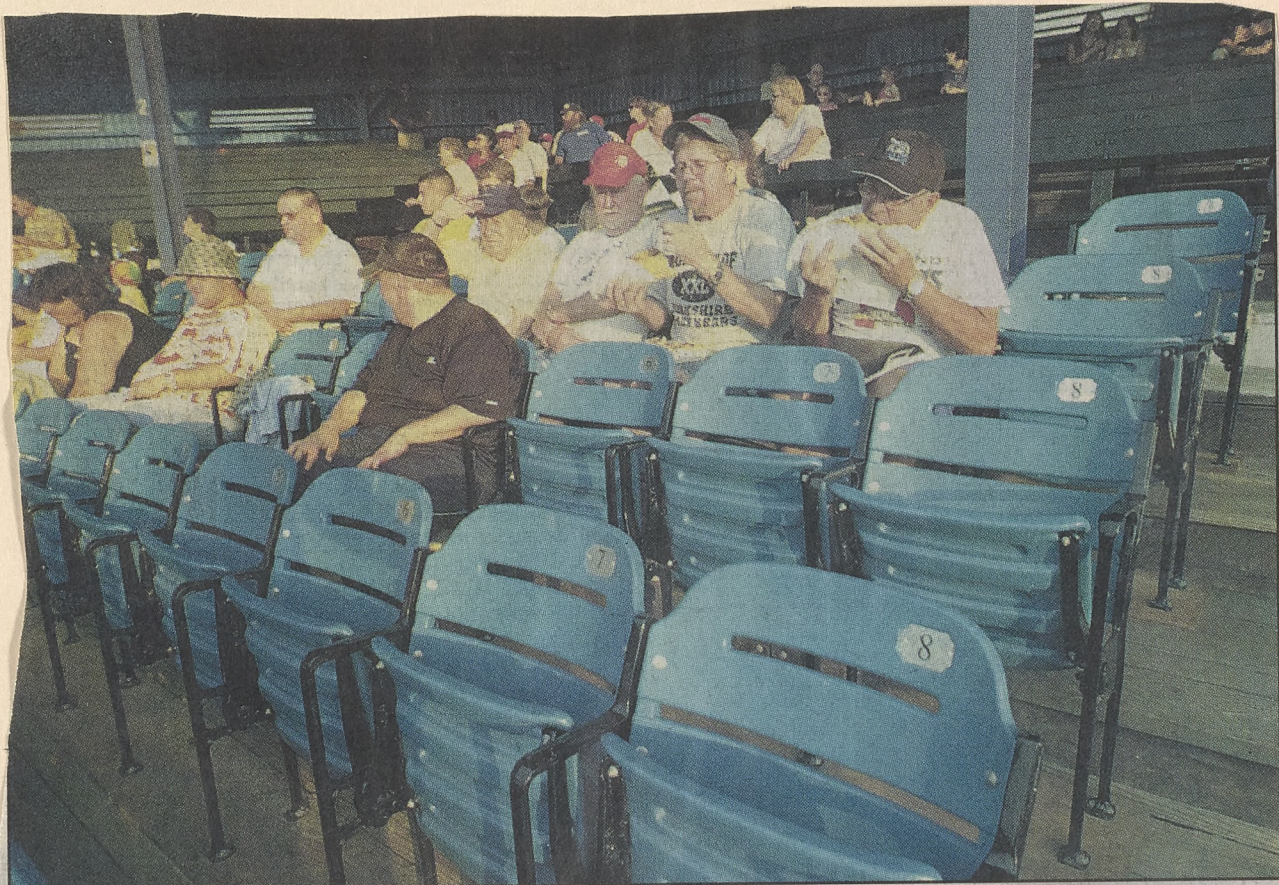
Boulton said Wahconah Park

would not fit the demographics for any of the Atlantic League's nine current teams because they all play in new stadiums.

"We're pretty much all state-of-the-art facilities," Boulton said. "It's pretty much a given that Pittsfield [does not have] a state-of-the-art facility, if it fits into our situation for the short-season league, we'd have to look at how it fits into our schedule."

"I'm willing to take a look," he said.

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Julie A. Brown / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Many seats stand empty at the Black Bears game at Wahconah Park Thursday evening in Pittsfield. The Bears' licensing agreement with the city and continued presence at Wahconah Park will be the subject of a meeting today between Mayor Sara Hathaway and the team's principal owner, Jonathan Fleisig.

Living with Bears

Mayor, owner to discuss future of team

By Tony Dobrowski
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The future of the Berkshire Black Bears baseball club and its two-year agreement with the city will be the subject of a meeting today between Mayor Sara Hathaway and Jonathan Fleisig, principal owner of the baseball team.

Members of the Parks Commission have questioned clauses in the licensing agreement signed by the team and the city on Nov. 27, 2001, before several of the current members were on the board. Hathaway said Parks Commission Chairman Michael Filpi and James McGrath, the city's director of community development, also will attend today's meeting.

Asked what she would discuss with Fleisig, Hathaway said, "I guess extending the Black Bears' reign over Wahconah Park, and hopefully keeping the team as [Pittsfield's] team. Also, we need to examine the licensing agreement."

The Parks Commission discussed the agreement, which expires Oct. 31, at its meeting on Monday night, Hathaway said.

"We need to tighten [the wording] up a little bit," she said.

Although the Black Bears have not drawn well or fared well in the standings, Hathaway believes the team has established itself as a tourist attraction and as an asset to the community.

Hathaway said she didn't believe a decision on whether the Black Bears stay in Pittsfield after this season would be made after today's meeting.

"It's our initial discussion, so I doubt we'll reach any conclusion," Hathaway said.

Although the Black Bears have not drawn well or fared well in the standings, Hathaway believes the team has established itself as a tourist attraction in the Berkshires and as an asset to the community.

The team has played before less than 30 percent capacity at 4,000-seat Wahconah Park so far this season, a decline from last summer when the paid attendance equaled about 33 percent capacity.

As an example of the team's community involvement, Hathaway mentioned minority owners Jennifer and Adam Hirsch, who co-produced the recent performances of "Damn Yankees" at Wahconah Park. The play was put on as a fund-raiser for the Colonial Theatre renovation project.

Hathaway also said she believes the city has gotten more out of its licensing agreement with the Black Bears regarding capital improvements to Wahconah Park than it did under a similar agreement with William Gladstone, the owner of Pittsfield's Class A New York-Penn League franchise, which played at Wahconah Park between 1989 and 2001 before moving to Troy, N.Y.

"But [the agreement] needs to be tightened," she said.

When asked to be specific, Hathaway referred to discussions this summer about money the team is required to spend on capital improvements to the 84-year-old ballpark.

8/17/03 BEARS, continued on A4

Mayor, owner to discuss Black Bears' future in city

BEARS from A1

"A good bit of money has gone into capital improvements," Hathaway said. But she said there is a "small bit" of money spent on other items that needs to be clarified in the agreement.

Under terms of the agreement, the Black Bears are required to pay \$75,000 each year toward the maintenance of the playing field and upkeep of the park.

At a Parks Commission meeting in April, board members Eugene Nadeau and John C. Marchesi said they had questions about some of the items the Black Bears purchased last season, including new concessions equipment, as well as \$3,500 listed for recycling expenses and \$700 toward cleaning the stadium.

Filpi said some of the board's five members have expressed concerns over some of the expenses the Black Bears have characterized as maintenance bills, and are fearful that the city will have to pay any costs that exceed the \$75,000 limit.

Michael Kardamis, the Black Bears' president and general manager, told The Eagle in April that the team spent more than \$75,000 during its first year in Pittsfield. He added that if the Black Bears' maintenance expenses exceed the two-year, \$150,000 threshold, the team, not the city, would pay for the additional expenditures.

Acting City Solicitor Jeffrey A. Honig told the board in April he believed that expenses questioned by the board were covered under a section of the agreement governing "nonstructural repairs," which he said was "broadly written."

Honig told the board then he didn't believe the Black Bears were submitting inappropriate expenses.

In a telephone interview from New York City on Wednesday, Fleisig declined to discuss aspects of the licensing agreement with the city, saying he was coming to Pittsfield to "have a friendly talk" with city officials, and to hear their opinions on the Black Bears' operations this year.

"I'm just trying to learn what they think," Fleisig said. "No more, no less ... I'm going to do a lot of listening, and see what everyone has to say. Sometimes it's better to listen and not talk."

"They have opinions," he added. "I'd like to hear them."

"I have not given it the thought that you have given it. This is just a simple get-together."

Fleisig also declined to com-

ment on the Black Bears' future in Pittsfield, or why the team has had trouble drawing fans in the two years it has played at Wahconah Park.

The Black Bears finished seventh out of eight teams in attendance in the Northern League's Eastern Division last year, drawing 56,925 fans for 43 home games, an average of 1,309 fans per game.

Not counting last night's home game with Bangor, the Black Bears were ranked seventh out of eight teams in attendance in the Northeast League this season. (The Northern League's East Division became the Northeast League this year.) They've drawn 37,363 fans in 34 home games, an average of 1,099 fans per game, according to the Northeast League's Web site.

Kardamis said the figures are based on paid attendance, but that the team frequently gives tickets to charitable groups and organizations, or lets other entities sell game tickets for fund-raising purposes.

'Others have struggled'

On the field, the Black Bears finished last in their four-team division in the Northern League last year in both halves of the season with an overall record of 24-65.

This year, the Black Bears started out with nine straight losses, but then won 21 of 37 games to finish the first half at 21-25, good enough for third place in their four-team division, 7 1/2 games behind first-place New Jersey.

In the second half of the regular season, the Black Bears stood in fourth with a 12-19 record, 4 1/2 games behind first-place Elmira, before last night's game. The Black Bears have 15 games, including 10 at home, remaining in the season, which ends Sept. 1.

Fleisig said he still hopes the Black Bears can clinch a spot in the Northeast League playoffs, in which the division winners in the first and second halves of the regular season meet in best-of-five series. Going into last night's game, the Black Bears had won three straight games and four of their last 10.

Fleisig said he would be willing to talk about the Black Bears' off-the-field activities after the Northeast League season ends in September, but that he would rather focus on the team's play on the field until then.

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8/17/03

Scrambling for eggs



4/20/03
Pandemonium reigned at the Boys' and Girls' Club in Pittsfield yesterday afternoon as 4- and 5-year-old youngsters reached for candy eggs during the 55th annual Holiday Egg Hunt. The event for four different age groups was sponsored by the club, Wal-Mart and the city Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation.

City Easter Egg hunt announced

The 2003 Pittsfield "Holiday Egg Hunt" on Saturday, April 19 at the Pittsfield Boys and Girls Club on Melville Street.
The hunt will start at: 1 p.m. for 2 & 3 year olds; 1:30 p.m. for 4 & 5 year olds; 2 p.m. for 6 & 7 year olds; and 2:30 p.m. for 8 & 9 year olds.
All age divisions will be held in the gym.
The event is open to Pittsfield children only. Prizes will be awarded in each group for those that find the green, blue, orange, yellow or purple egg. Children are required to bring their own baskets or bags.
For further information on this free event call 499-9343. 4/10/03

City Easter egg hunt to be April 19

PITTSFIELD — The Department of Parks and Recreation has announced that the annual Easter egg hunt will be held on Saturday, April 19.
The event is co-sponsored by the Pittsfield Boys' and Girls' Club and Wal-Mart. The hunt will be held at the club on Melville Street.
The hunt will start at 1 for 2- and 3-year-olds; 1:30 for 4- and 5-year-olds; 2 for 6- and 7-year-olds, and 2:30 for 8- and 9-year-olds.
All age divisions will be held in the gym.
The event is open to Pittsfield children only. Prizes will be awarded in each age group for those that find the green, blue, orange, yellow or purple egg. Children are required to bring their own baskets.
Participants should use the front entrance of the club on Melville Street.
Further information: Department of Parks and Recreation at 499-9343. 4/12/03



Photos by Julie A. Brown / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Boo to you!

Dressed as a vampire, 9-year-old Zach Hoffman sits with his mom, Shelinda, and sister Crystal, 4, dressed as a cat, watching the annual Pittsfield Halloween Parade on North Street last night. More Halloween Parade photos, contest winners, Page B5.



Thomas Marley of Pittsfield talks to his granddaughter Marley Knysh, center, a fourth grader at Stearns Elementary School, dressed as a witch, and her friend and classmate Sarah Pero, a black cat.



Luke Dallenbach, 4, a well-armed pirate, gets a good view of the parade from the shoulders of his father, John Dallenbach.

Pittsfield plans spooky schedule for Halloween

PITTSFIELD — The Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation has announced details of Halloween activities taking place in the city. Trick or treat is scheduled for Friday from 5:30 to 7 citywide.

The 59th annual Halloween Parade, sponsored by the Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation, will take place tomorrow evening at 7.

In addition, the Colonial Theatre will host a Haunted Halloween Tour of the theater tomorrow evening from 7 to 9.

HALLOWEEN, continued on B4

Halloween activities set in Pittsfield, area towns

HALLOWEEN from B1

The tour will feature highlights of the Colonial's history in a spooky theatrical setting. The cost is \$3 per person, or two admissions for \$5. Tickets will be on sale at the Pittsfield Visitors Center during the event.

Prior to the parade, the Parks Department is sponsoring, with partial funding provided by Greylock Federal Credit Union, a "Halloween Spooktacular" science show at the concourse of the Central Block Building, 75 North St. The 45-minute show offers "a look into the secret world of the mad scientist's laboratory." The free show will begin at 5:30.

The parade will follow a route up East Street toward Park Square and then proceed down North Street to Wahconah Street. The southbound lane of North Street will remain open, as will the eastbound lane of East Street.

Sheriff Carmen C. Massimiano will again be grand marshal for the event. Awards will be given for first-, second- and third-place bands and floats. Friendly's gift certificates will be awarded on the spot to 75 costumed children who march in the parade or watch it from the sidelines.

The parade lineup follows:

- Section 1**
1. Berkshire County sheriff's office motorcycles
 2. Halloween Parade Grand Marshal

Paid Political Advertisement

- Carmen Massimiano
3. Berkshire County sheriff's office marchers
 4. Berkshire County sheriff's office float
 5. Pittsfield Fire Department firetruck and Sparky
 6. Eagles Band

Section 2

1. Crosby School float
2. Crosby School marchers
3. Berkshire Trolley Car float
4. Winter Carnival queen and lady-in-waiting
5. Capeless School float
6. Capeless School marchers

Section 3

1. Pittsfield High School Band and Color Guard
2. Stearns School float
3. Stearns School marchers
4. Antique firetruck
5. Egremont School float
6. Egremont School marchers

Section 4

1. Taconic High School Band and Color Guard
2. United Federation of Fathers float
3. Pittsfield Parks Department tractor
4. Monster truck
5. Allendale School marchers
6. Lanesboro Girl Scout Troop 340 marchers
7. Morningside Crime Watch marchers

Section 5

1. WBEC Live 105.5 pontoon boat
2. Conte School marchers
3. East Coast Refinishing float
4. Sacred Heart School float
5. Sacred Heart School marchers
6. Parks Department truck
7. Pittsfield Police cruiser

Paid Political Advertisement

Learn-to-skate program set in Pittsfield

PITTSFIELD — The Pittsfield Parks Speed Skating Club, in conjunction with the Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation, will conduct the annual Learn-to-Skate program beginning Friday, Dec. 26.

The program will run from Friday through Wednesday, Dec. 26 to 31, from 11:45 to 12:45 at the Pittsfield Boys' and Girls' Club rink on Melville Street.

Skaters are required to wear helmets and gloves; elbow and knee pads are also recommended.

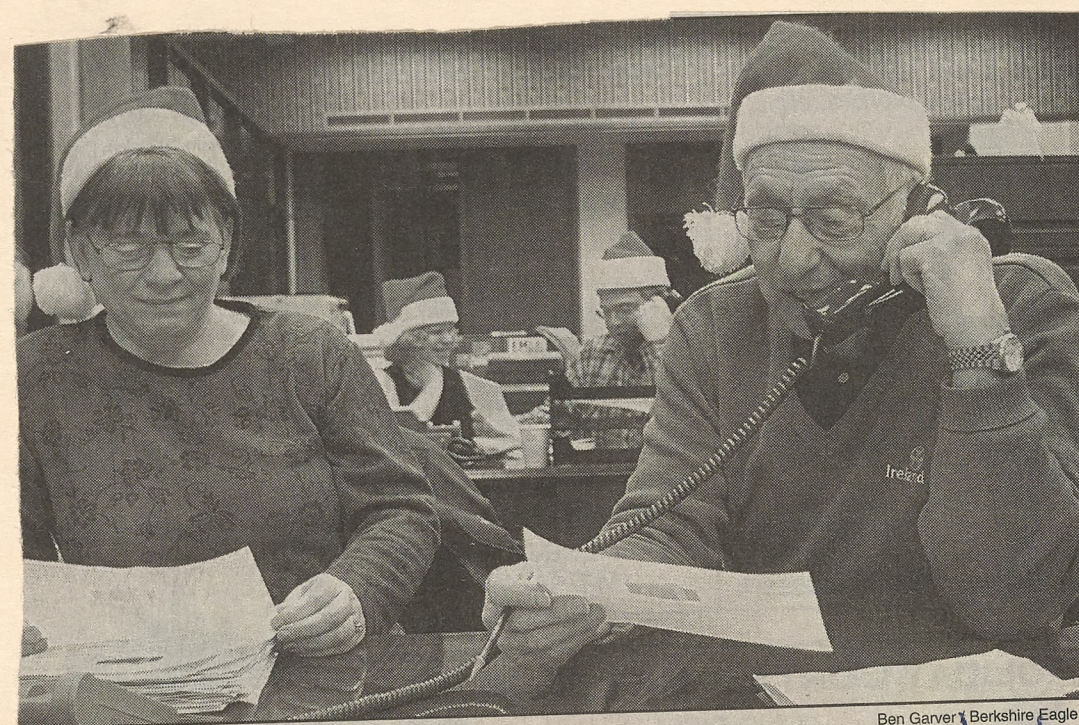
They should dress warmly but avoid loose, baggy clothes and long scarves.

Skates will be available at no extra charge. No double runner skates are permitted and skaters must be at least 5 years of age.

Registration will be held Sunday, Dec. 14, from 6:30 to 7:30 and Tuesday, Dec. 16, from 6 to 7 p.m. at the Pittsfield Boys' and Girls' Club rink.

Registration will also be held at the Pittsfield Park Commission office at 874 North St. on weekdays between 8:30 and 4.

Cost of the program is \$20 (\$50 family maximum charge).



Ben Garver / Berkshire Eagle Staff

North Pole connection

Volunteer Santa Claus Paul DiVirgilio of the Knights of Columbus and 'North Pole operator' Rita Laviolette make a call from the offices of Berkshire Bank to a Pittsfield child as part of the Pittsfield Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation's 22nd annual North Pole Calling program on Monday night. In the background are Jack and Justine Laviolette.

Diagonal parking in Pittsfield



Tony Stracuzzi, at lower left, and workers from the Pittsfield Parks Department install this year's Christmas tree at Park Square yesterday. The tree was donated to the city by James and Jo-Ann Suttle and members of the Villanova family in memory of their mother, Ida Villanova, who died on April 23, 2002.

Winter carnival contestants sought

Applications are now being accepted for the 2004 Pittsfield Winter Carnival Queen contest, part of the Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee, Inc.'s Winter Carnival.

Applications are available at all Pittsfield high schools and at Berkshire Community College. They are also available week days at the Springside House, 874 North Street.

The contest is open to all single girls ages 17 through 21 who have never been married and have no children, and who live, attend school or work in Pittsfield, or who live in the adjoining towns of Dalton, Hancock, Lanesboro, Lenox or Richmond.

Each contestant must sell a minimum of 1500 Winter Carnival buttons to be eligible for judging at the queen's coronation ball on Saturday, February 14 at the ITAM Lodge.

The sale of buttons is a separate contest and has no bearing on the judging of the queen and the lady-in-waiting, who will be chosen by a panel of judges based on their scores in different areas which include poise, personality, speech, appearance and Winter Carnival knowledge. Scholarships will be awarded to the queen and the lady-in-waiting. Miss Congeniality to be selected by the queen contestants the night of the ball, and the contestant selling the most buttons will each receive special gifts.

Money raised by the sale of the buttons is used to fund the Winter Carnival events, which take place throughout the winter. These events include, family day, toboggan races, ski races, and skating races.

There is a limit of 16 contestants; the deadline for filing applications is Wednesday, December 5 at 4 p.m. Applicants are asked to hand-deliver their applications to the Springside House on weekdays between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.

For more information contact co-chairs Tina Melle at 841-1366 or Julie Salatino at 442-4260.

Crosby School float tops in city Halloween Parade

PITTSFIELD — A float with a medieval theme took top honors in competition at the city's 59th annual Halloween Parade downtown last night.

The float, which was made by Crosby School students, won the first prize of \$150.

Second place went to a float entered by East Coast Refinishing of Pittsfield. The float's theme was "The Reincarnation of Hazel the Witch."

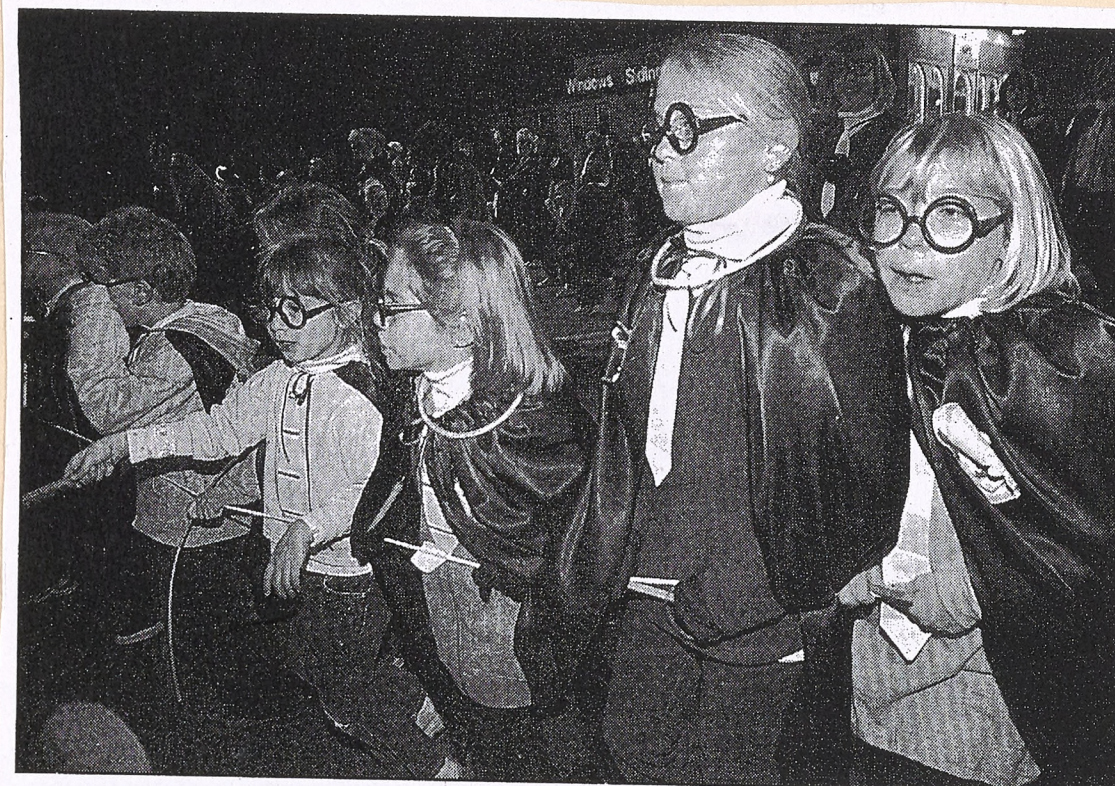
Stearns School's float, "Haunted Carnival," took third-place honors. Prizes for second- and third-place finishers were \$125 and \$100, respectively.

The Pittsfield High School

band won first place in the parade's music competition. Second place went to the Eagles Band. Taconic High School's band took third place.

"The judges had a very tough time with the bands," said James McGrath, the city's director of community services. "The judges want to compliment all the makers of the floats on their creativity. The floats were all exceptional."

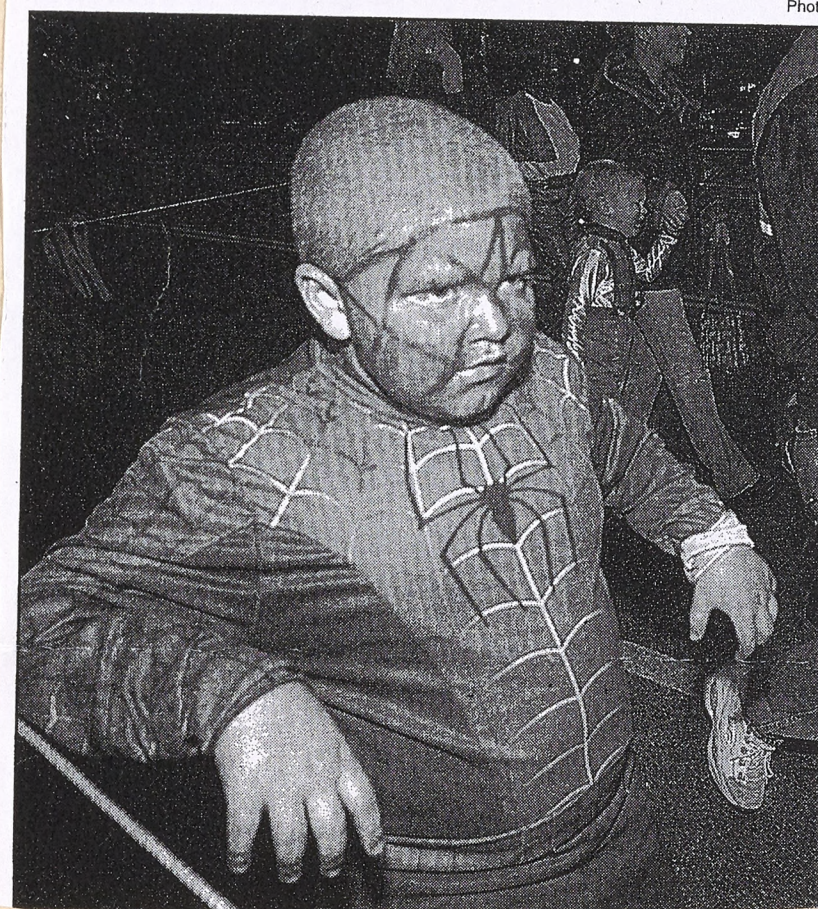
McGrath said that gift certificates for ice cream were handed out to some 150 children at yesterday's parade, which is sponsored by the city's Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation.



Photos by Julie A. Brown / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Halloween heroes and heroines

Above, students from Allendale Elementary School in Pittsfield dressed up as wizards from the Hogwarts School and marched in the city's annual Halloween Parade last night in downtown Pittsfield. At left, Matthew Ott, 8, wore a Spiderman costume while walking with other students from Conte Elementary School in the parade.



Pittsfield plans spooky schedule for Halloween

PITTSFIELD — The Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation has announced details of Halloween activities taking place in the city.

Trick or treat is scheduled for Friday from 5:30 to 7 citywide.

The 59th annual Halloween Parade, sponsored by the Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation, will take place tomorrow evening at 7.

In addition, the Colonial Theatre will host a Haunted Halloween Tour of the theater tomorrow evening from 7 to 9.

HALLOWEEN, continued on B4

Parade planning meeting slated

PITTSFIELD — The Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation Department has announced that the second and final Halloween Parade organizational meeting will be held tomorrow at 7 p.m. at Springside House, 874 North St.

One or more representatives of local organizations wishing to participate are strongly encouraged to attend this meeting if they plan to enter a float, band, or marching unit.

The parade will be held Thursday, Oct. 30, at 7 p.m.

The 59th annual Halloween Parade is being sponsored by the Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation. For additional information, interested groups may call the department at 499-9343 or visit the department's Web site, www.pittsfieldparks.org.

Halloween Parade meeting is Oct. 1

PITTSFIELD — The Department of Community Services/Parks & Recreation has announced that the first Halloween Parade organizational meeting will be held on Wednesday, Oct. 1, at 7.

The meeting will be held at Springside House, 874 North St.

All float entries to the parade must have a theme that is Halloween-related, the announcement said. One or more representatives of local organizations are encouraged to attend the meeting if they plan to enter a float, band or marching unit.

The Halloween parade will be held this year on Thursday, Oct. 30, at 7.

The 59th annual Halloween Parade is sponsored by the Department of Community Services/Parks & Recreation. For further information, interested groups may call the department at 499-9343 or visit the Parks Department Web site, www.pittsfieldparks.org.

City seeks Christmas tree for Park Square

The parks and recreation department is asking anyone who is willing to donate an evergreen tree for use as the city's official Christmas tree at Park Square to call 499-9343 no later than November 7.

Criteria to be used in selecting that "special" tree will be: minimum height of approximately 30 feet; superior shape; ease of access to the tree for cutting; adequate room to safely fall the tree; and east of transporting the tree.

Screening and selection of trees will take place the week of November 10. Cutting and installation of the tree at Park Square is scheduled for the week of November 24.

Winning button design created by St. Joe junior

PITTSFIELD — Katie DeMarco, an 11th-grader at St. Joseph's Central High School, has been named the winner of the 2004 Pittsfield Winter Carnival Button Design contest. Ron Przedpelski, chairman of this year's contest, made the announcement.

DeMarco's design was chosen from more than 300 entries submitted to the Winter Sports Committee by children from the city's elementary, middle and high schools.

Category winners are as follows:

► Kindergarten through Grade 2 — Shea Caden, Williams School, Grade 1.

► Grades 3 to 5 — McKensie Saldo, St. Mark Middle School, Grade 5.

► Grades 6 to 8 — Lindsay Russo, St. Mark, Grade 8.

► Grades 9 to 12 — Chris White, Taconic High School, Grade 10.

The button design grand prize is a \$50 Berkshire Mall gift certificate. Category winners receive a \$25 mall gift certificate.

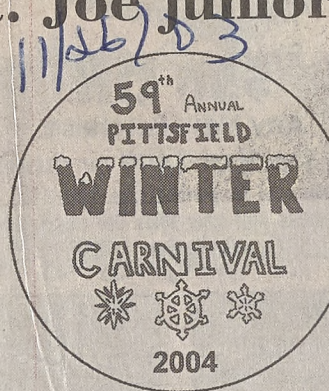
The contest is sponsored by the Pittsfield Winter Sports Committee Inc. of the Department of

The winning 2004 Winter Carnival button was designed by Katie DeMarco.

Community Services/Parks and Recreation. Buttons are sold by Winter Carnival queen contestants and proceeds help pay for carnival events. Buttons will go on sale Sunday, Jan. 11.

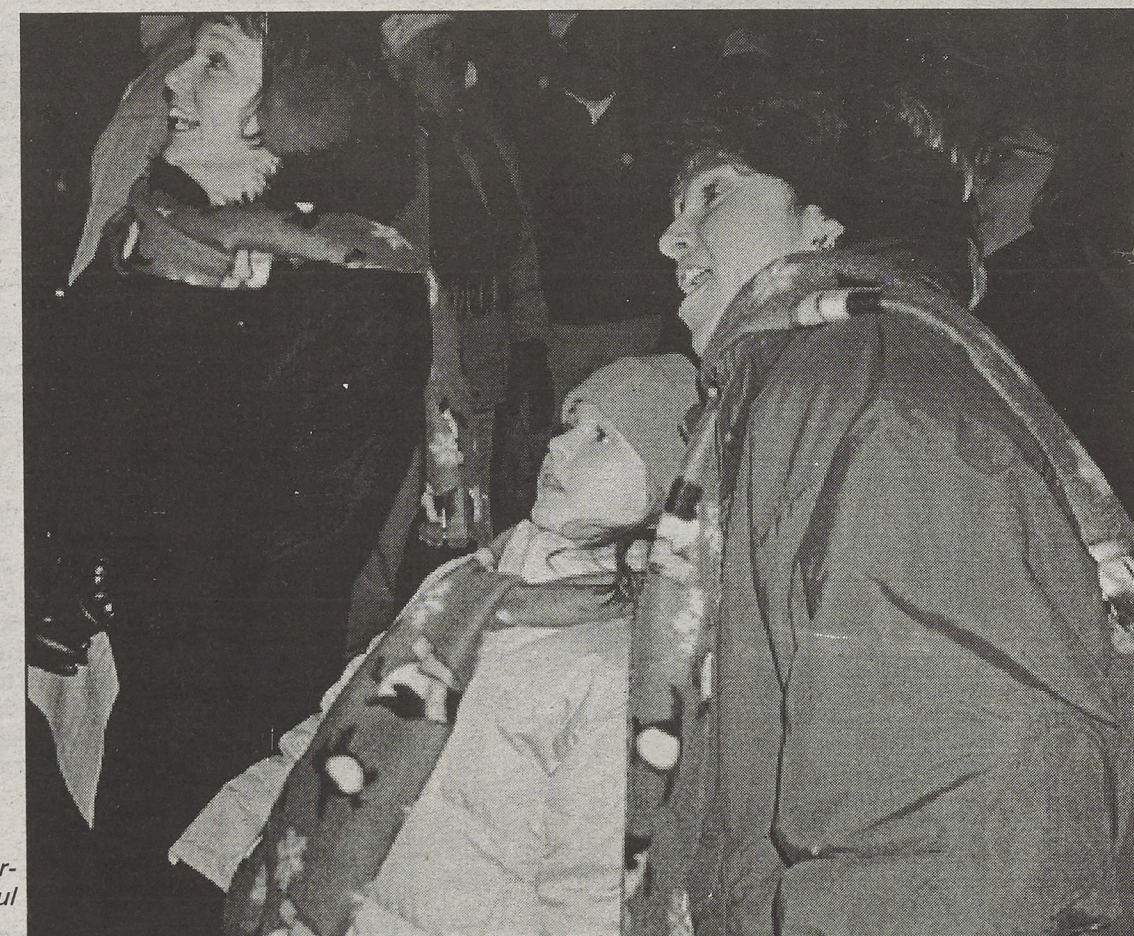
Application forms to enter the carnival queen contest are available at the Parks Department, at www.pittsfieldparks.org or by calling 499-9343.

For information on upcoming carnival events, call the number listed above or visit the Web site or www.cwnicholls.com/Carnival.



The Pittsfield Gazette December 11, 2003

Park Square Lights Up



A couple hundred revellers gathered for Friday's tree-lighting ceremony at Park Square. For those close to the action (at right) the colorful illumination of the tree happened with a dramatic blur (above).



Matt Gilmore works on a snowman at Park Square prior to Friday's tree-lighting ceremony. Organizers trucked in snow for the event; a few hours later, a protracted snowstorm dumped nearly two feet of the white stuff in the Pittsfield area.



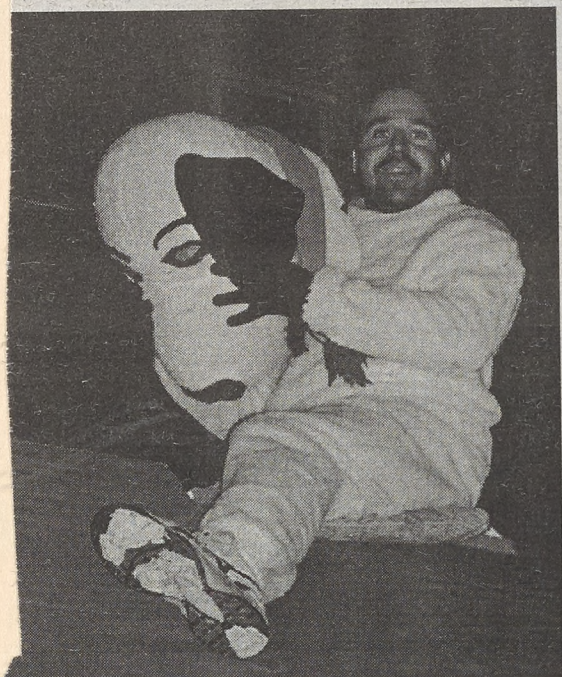
While Santa Claus' arrival via fire truck got top billing, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer earned squeals of delight from many youngsters.



The Berkshire Hillsmen ensured a tuneful celebration as they accompanied the tree-lighting with seasonal carols.

Halloween Horrors

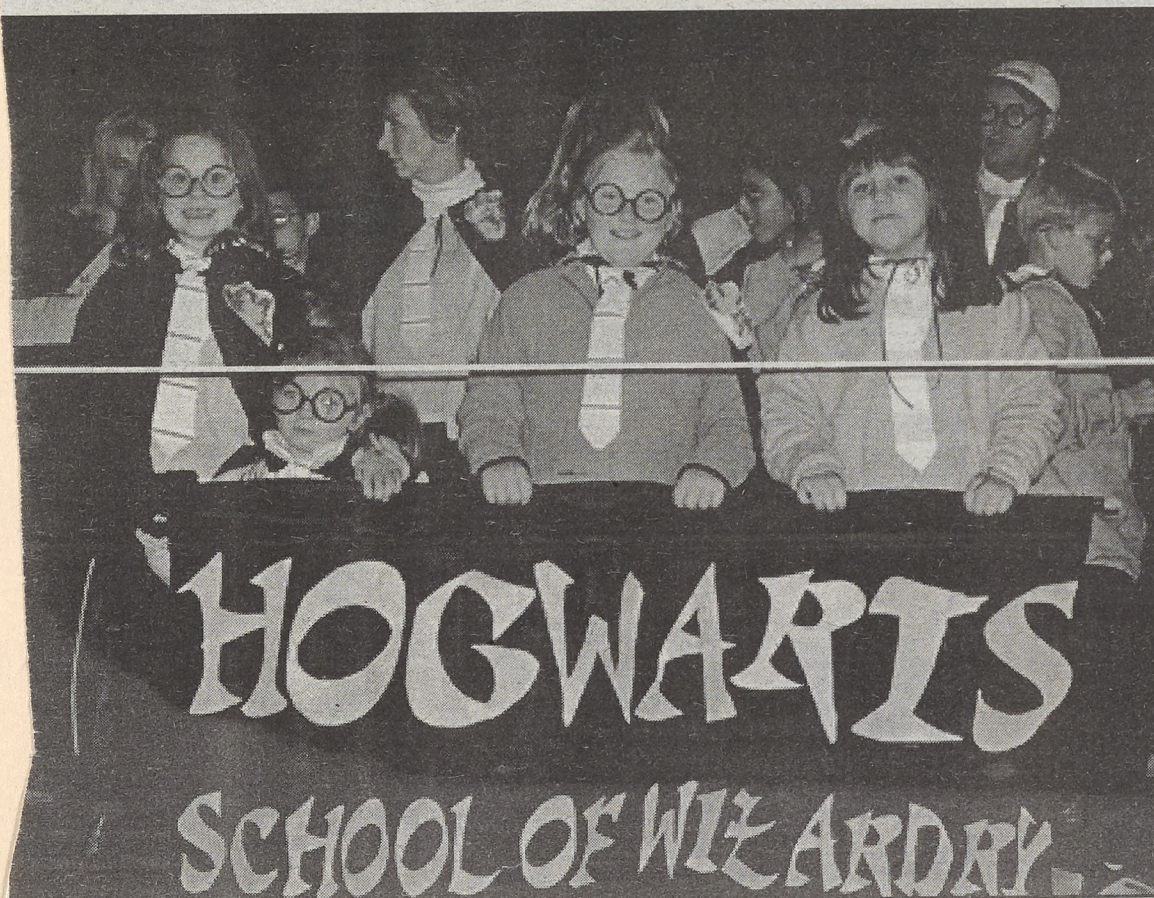
A fire-breathing dragon helped Crosby School win the top float prize in this past Thursday's Halloween Parade.



Charles Schulze's Snoopy had a special space atop Egremont School's float.



The Pittsfield High School band took first place among the parade's three musical units.



A Harry Potter theme — with some great costumes — distinguished the marching unit from Allendale School.

Pittsfield's Christmas tree comes to light

12/6/03

At right, Mike Joyce of Pittsfield, left, director of the Berkshire Hillsmen, leads the group in Christmas carols after the lighting of the Christmas tree in Park Square in Pittsfield last night.

Other singers are, from left, Maurice Brazie of New Marlboro, Dick Whitehead of Pittsfield and Frank Sblendido of Ghent, N.Y.

Below, Kurt Schagen of Richmond looks up through the cold night air at the brilliance of the city's official Christmas tree.

Photos by Julie A. Brown / Berkshire Eagle Staff



Pittsfield Parks softball registration set

The Pittsfield Parks and Recreation Department will hold signups for this years house league softball program tomorrow from 12-3 p.m., and Monday from 6-8 p.m. at Springside House. Registration for girls ages 9-16 is \$20 per person. Information: 499-9343. The League is also looking for an Umpire in Chief for the season. Minor league umpires are paid \$20 a game and major umpires \$25. Information: Paul Cote: 841-1766.

4/4/03

The Berkshire Eagle, Tuesday, April 15, 2003 — C3

Area Sports

Pittsfield softball registration set

Registration for the minor and major league softball programs of the Pittsfield Parks Department will take place tomorrow from 6-8 p.m., at Springside House, 874 North St., Pittsfield. Coaches are also needed for teams in both leagues.

Board failed Babe Ruth champions

To the Editor of THE EAGLE:

In today's world we often read about our misguided youth and the problems they encounter in their lives. The local and national news often report stories regarding youth in negative ways, from drug use to violent crimes — you name it, it's out there. We need to salute the youth of Berkshire County who take part in positive activities and recognize their accomplishments. When our teenagers are accomplishing great goals, shouldn't that warrant praise and positive reinforcement?

I am a proud parent of a member of this year's Pittsfield Babe Ruth All Star age 15 team. This team not only won the Berkshire County (District One) title, but also won the Western Massachusetts championship. From there, each state in the Northeast sends its state championship team to regional competition. What a great accomplishment this was for a Berkshire County team! The winner of the regional competition was sent to represent the Northeast in the Babe Ruth World Series.

Our boys received absolutely no support or recognition from the Pittsfield Babe Ruth board of di-

rectors. Other teams in the Northeast were recognized by their cities' Babe Ruth boards of directors with banquets, baseball jackets and/or trophies. However, the team was recognized by Mayor Sara Hathaway and the City Council.

Even the Boston Red Sox recognized the team's accomplishments and honored the champions from the Northeast at a Sunday night game at Fenway Park. The Pittsfield Babe Ruth board of directors did not even provide transportation for the boys.

The board of directors begrudgingly supplied the team with new baseball caps depicting both our city and state to wear in regional competition, and paid for a bus to transport our boys to New Hampshire because the team had an early morning weekday check-in time.

The board never publicly recognized the boys' coaches, who sacrificed their summers and their family time for the team either — and believe me, they deserve it.

This is not about the money. This is about acknowledging a job well done by the team and their coaches.

SHARON NOLAN
Pittsfield, Sept. 30, 2003

10/5/03

